the SHADOW

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NEW ORLEANS ON THE MEND:

Report Back From the Gulf Coast

An Eyewitness Report By Chris Heneghan (heneghanc@yahoo.com)

(On August 29, 2005, storm surges from Hurricane Katrina overwhelmed the levees separating low-lying New Orleans from neighboring Lake Pontchartrain and flooded 80% of the city. Hardest hit were heavily African American sections of the city, such as the 9th Ward, where thousands of houses were submerged. Government plans for these devastated areas have amounted to little more than demolition and gentrification by real estate developers eager to take advantage of the misery of a populace which has abandoned the city in large numbers. However, there are those who are fighting to save the heritage and homes of New Orleans residents. Activist/journalist Chris Heneghan visited the gulf coast and filed the following report for the SHADOW)

As my flight hooked inland off the Gulf of Mexico, and we began our descent on the Crescent city, from my window seat, I could see landmarks left by a disaster I had watched news coverage of just four months earlier. The winds had stopped, the flood waters subsided, but New Orleans was still suffering. A sea of blue tarps covering storm damaged roofs and a patch of freshly spread mortar atop the Superdome guided us into touchdown at Louis Armstrong International. I swallowed, trying to get my ears to pop, but my saliva was stopped by a lump in my throat as thought to myself, "This is real, where all that horrific stuff went down." Images from the air would not prepare me for what I would encounter on the ground.

I came to spend my semester break working with a grass roots relief organization called the Common Ground Collective. I was drawn to Common Ground by their slogan "solidarity not charity," and the idea of providing mutual aid and support to returning residents in this region.

"Not sure how safe this area is," the cab driver said as he dropped me at the volunteer check-in at Common Ground, a house at 1415 Franklin Avenue in the Ninth Ward. I wasn't sure whether he had fallen victim to the looter paranoia syndrome that infected the minds of so many in the days following the storm, or if he was referring to the bleak veil of desolation Hurricane Katrina had draped over this area of the city. The taxi was the only vehicle on a street that should have been bustling with traffic at this time of day.

I stood on the sidewalk for a moment to process my surroundings before heading into the house. The crimson glow of the sunset reflected off puddles of black flood water. The city could only pump so much out. On every block, it seemed that there was a broken water main. Running out of hydrants into the road, water was spewing from cracks in the concrete. There were roofing tiles scattered in the road, mounds of garbage strewn everywhere, cars with smashed windshields, abandoned boats from search and rescue attempts, downed wires, telephone poles, traffic lights and street signs blown from the posts that anchored them to the ground. Then there were the houses and the businesses, all abandoned, with their windows boarded up or broken out, as far as I could see. Various things were spray-painted on doors by rescue crews: no bodies inside, number of bodies found inside, no animals inside, number of dead animals found inside. Painted next to the numbers on most buildings were the letters TFW, which I learned stood for "Toxic Flood Waters." Aside from the volunteer house behind me running on generator power, this section of the city appeared to be a ghost town.

I left the desolation on the sidewalk and stepped inside where a woman name Sam met me with a smile and introduced herself as the volunteer coordinator. I dropped my backpack, gave her my emergency contact information, told her how long I was planning to say and signed a few waivers. It had been a long day of traveling for me and I could have laid out my bed roll and slept on the floor of that office. Rest would come, but not yet. "You have room in your car for one more," Sam told a grey-haired woman and man with a long brown pony tail. The two were bleary eyed, sitting on the floor finishing cups of coffee. "Yeah, we can take him," the woman said as she stood up. "Where we going?" the man asked, rising from his resting place on the floor. "Here's directions to the community center," Sam said. "Dinner is served around seven." She gave us one last welcome, and said "see you in the morning," as the three of us headed out the door.

I loaded my gear into a tightly packed station wagon. Closing the hatch, I noticed the New York license plate. As I climbed into the back seat, I mentioned that I was from Connecticut. The two introduced themselves as a mother and son who ran a horse farm in upstate New York. They planned to stay for a week and lend a hand. We talked about how nice it was to get away from winter as we headed for the community center.

The Greater Mount Carmel Baptist Church on the corner of Pauline and Claiborne was home to the Common Ground Community Center. Badly damaged by flood waters and a prayer away from FEMA [Federal Emergency Management Agency–Ed.] assistance or an insurance check, the Collective had worked out an agreement with members of the congregation. They would use the space for the time being in exchange for providing renovations to the building. Gutted and abated of black mold by volunteers who came before me, the church now served as a hub for grass roots relief, a place where Common Ground volunteers ate, slept, and congregated before and after their workdays.

The community center was like an oasis amid the storm battered streets of the Upper Ninth Ward. The aroma of spices in the balmy evening air invited me into the church courtyard. It was my first look at the logistics that made Common Ground's operation possible. Under three EZ-UP tents and a tarp was an outdoor kitchen where four propane burners and a volunteer cooking crew worked from 5am-8pm to provide three meals a day for up to three hundred people.

Across from the kitchen, a group of volunteers were repairing bicycles they had salvaged from debris piles on the streets. Nicknamed, "flood bikes," these scrapped together peddle-powered creations were a

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"BATTLE OF THE LOWER NINTH," Seven Pages of Original Art By Seth Tobocman, Begins on Page Ten

EDITORIALS:

DEFEND YOUR RIGHT TO LIVE IN NEW YORK CITY!

By A. Kronstadt

The Rent Guidelines Board is a nine-member committee that is appointed entirely by the mayor and which includes two tenant representatives, two landlord representatives, and five "public" members who serve essentially at the discretion of the mayor. An ominous sign this year was that the only public member who had been sympathetic to tenant issues in recent years, Martin Zelnick, was dismissed by Mayor Bloomberg in April.

This raises tenant fears that the board will approve a rent increase considerably higher than the 5.5% hike it approved last year, and why the last public hearing on May 8 was particularly raucous, with angry tenants disrupting the meeting for long periods of time.

The reason tenants are so angry and end up disrupting Rent Guidelines Board hearings is that every time that damned board meets and goes through the motions of deliberating, they always ratchet up apartment rents--this time, a possible 8.5% increase is on the table--and a certain number of moderate income tenants are driven out of the city.

Because there is a $2,000 per month rent threshold, beyond which a tenant is no longer protected by rent regulations which control the amount of rent that can be charged by a landlord, an 8.5% increase would push tenants whose rents are approximately $1,850 per month over $2,000 per month and out of regulation protection. Those tenants would then get a letter saying that their rent is now $2,500, or $3,000 per month, or whatever the landlord wants to charge them. If they cannot pay the new rent, they are out of luck.

This loophole was introduced by the New York State legislature in the 1980s when $2,000 a month was considered a hefty rent. Although the $2,000 per month threshold is referred to as "luxury decontrol," rents of $1,500 per month or higher nowadays are not for luxury apartments, but are more commonly charged for ordinary units down to the level of studios. Luxury decontrol is on the upper-income end of the scale. On the lower-income end, there are people who just won't be able to pay another 8.5%, or whatever the increase turns out to be, even if their rents are below $1,000 per month, and they will get evicted. This happens to thousands of renters every year.

Luxury decontrol is another of the mechanisms that the legislature has put into effect to sabotage the rent regulation system, which is controlled at the state level, even though New York City's Rent Guidelines Board has a say over the size of permissible rent hikes. The laws are phrased as if they are only temporary, and every certain number of years, they have to be renewed by both houses of the state legislature.

There is also a provision called the Urstadt law, stating that New York City cannot enact municipal rent regulations that are more restrictive on property owners than those coming from Albany. In 1997, the Republican majority in the upper house of the New York State legislature made an effort to allow rent regulations to expire, and blackmailed the cowardly Democrats into accepting a drastic weakening of the laws, including allowing landlords to raise the legal rent by 20% every time an apartment becomes vacant. Not only did this "vacancy allowance" practically nullify rent regulation for the next generation of New Yorkers, but it works together with luxury decontrol to undermine rent regulations, because each time an apartment changes hands, the rent ratchets up 20% closer to the $2,000 threshold, after which there are no more rent regulations and the landlord can demand whatever he wants.

The New York State Legislature voted in 2003 to extend rent laws until 2011. Because of luxury decontrol, vacancy allowances and evictions, by 2011, there will be far fewer tenants protected by rent regulations than there were in 2003. As a result, the political pressure to preserve the remaining rent protections will be much less. This convenient self-destruct system was rigged by the oligopoly of Finance, Insurance, and Real Estate interests (read "FIRE" -- think of arson), who tell the state and city governments what to do. With the deck so stacked against us, we regular people who live in NYC can only raise our voices and push back.

Come to the latest Rent Guidelines Board "Public Session" meeting, where the next pre-decided rent increase will be deliberated without any comments from the public. Even If people make noise and draw attention to the issue, the new rent increase may be a done deal, but at least we won't go along quietly.

When: Tuesday, June 27, 2006 – 9:30pm
Where: The Great Hall at Cooper Union, 7 East Seventh Street (corner of Third Ave.)

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HIT THE GREEDY LANDLORDS WHERE IT HURTS!!

By Chris Flash

Since the 1980s, when the Lower East Side/East Village became fashionable again, we have lost countless locally-owned businesses that make up the fabric of our neighborhood. Small cafés and diners, hardware stores, bike shops, laundromats, clothing and jewelry designers, second hand stores, bakeries and theaters have been pushed out by expensive restaurants, yuppie dives, bars and clubs.

In recent years, with real estate prices and rents at an all-time high, these losses have accelerated, with an invasion by corporate chains like Dunkin Donuts, the GAP, Urban Outfitters, McDonald's and, worst of all, Starbucks.

Every time there is an upswing in the real estate market, lenders make money available that encourages landlords and real estate developers to replace low density buildings (garages, auto repair shops, plumbing supply houses, etc) with luxury high-rise apartments, to overbuild on the smallest of lots and to remove lower rent paying tenants by bringing about unsafe building conditions and suspicious fires that get their buildings vacated. This happened at the apartment building on the southwest corner of Eldridge and East Houston, and at a row of buildings on the west side of Avenue B, between Third and Fourth Streets--once repaired and renovated, the original tenants and store owners were not allowed to return--those apartments and store fronts now command market rate rents. Once an area is sufficiently gentrified, corporate chain stores come rushing in to push out local businesses and further homogenize our neighborhood.

Investors who purchase properties in this currently hyper-inflated real estate market are more reliant than ever on higher commercial rents in order to cover the huge debt service on their mortgages and real estate taxes on their over-priced properties. This, in addition to their overall greed, results in landlords jacking up rents on commercial tenants.

As a result, new businesses are immediately saddled with insanely high rents that they struggle to cover each month. If they fail to take root quickly, most of these new businesses run out of money within a few months and are gone. Though long-established businesses hit with rent increases are more able to absorb rent increases up to a point, either way, this translates into higher prices for customers already paying the highest residential rents in the history of the city.

National corporate chain stores can afford these insanely high rents, even if the income from their neighborhood locations doesn't cover expenses, since they have deep pockets and other operations to offset their losses here. As they maintain their presence in our neighborhood, these chains steal market share from smaller neighborhood businesses trying to stay afloat.

If greedy landlords who force neighborhood businesses out through rent increases fail to get higher rents for their commercial spaces in their buildings, they will be less likely able to cover their mortgage payments. The resulting deficits can lead to these landlords defaulting on their mortgages and having their properties foreclosed on by their lenders.

These carpet-bagging parasites that pay too much for their properties are responsible for the inflated real estate market that results in astronomical rents for residential and commercial tenants, and higher prices for everyone, as they destroy the character of our neighborhood.

Ultimately, many of these investors end up losing their properties when they can't pay their mortgages and/or when they can't come up with the balloon payments they face 5-10 years later, usually due to property values decreasing as interest rates increase, and when lenders tighten the money supply as the inflated real estate market corrects itself. (This has happened before and it will happen again!!) Unfortunately, by then, the damage to our neighborhood has been done--neighborhood businesses are gone for good!!

By refusing to patronize any national chain stores or new businesses taking the places of neighborhood businesses that are displaced by greedy landlords' rent increases, we can help keep corporate interlopers out of our neighborhood and assist these landlords in losing their buildings. At the very least, it will demonstrate to these landlords that it is not in their best interest to force out neighborhood businesses.

If employed on a large enough scale, this can result in lower real estate prices, lower rents, more diverse neighborhood businesses and prices of food and consumer goods can become more affordable for all of us. Why should we pay to help pay the mortgages of greedy landlords who are gentrifying our neighborhood and feed the corporate chains that do not deserve our money? We have the power and we must use it!!

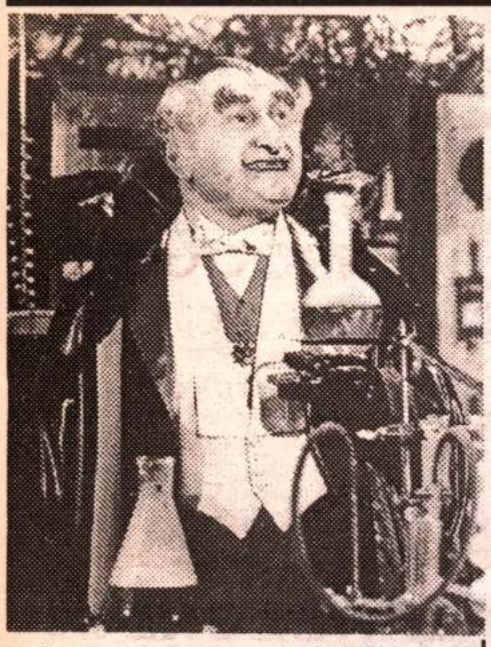
WHAT YOU CAN DO:

> Boycott corporate interlopers, chain stores, franchises and yuppie dives that have displaced or taken over the spaces of local neighborhood businesses, and let the landlords and incoming commercial tenants know it.!! Vote with your dollars--wherever you spend your money determines who stays in business--you can help decide who stays and who goes!!

> Put pressure on politicians and other elected officials. Push them to enforce restrictions on building heights and density, to landmark neighborhoods in order to prevent demolitions, to stop zoning variances that allow real estate developers to overbuild, and to block "big box" corporate chain stores from setting up shop here.

> Use your imagination to make life intolerable for real estate speculators

AL LEWIS: 1923-2006



Like countless others who loved him, we were extremely saddened when we heard that Al Lewis passed away on February 3.

Al had been in bad shape after a second heart operation in 2003, but he had persevered, in spite of it.

For some reason, a week after his death, the New York Times decided to dig into Al Lewis' past in an attempt to dispel some of the stories he told about his life. This rare investigative journalistic effort, coming from "the paper of record" that parroted the falsehoods used by the Bush Administration as justification for the US invasion of Iraq in 2003, that later admitted they were wrong and that they should have done **some** fact checking first, was laughable.

Does it really matter that Al Lewis gave his year of birth as 1910 when he was actually born in 1923, as his son revealed? Does it matter that he may or may not have had his merchant marine ship blown up during WW2, as he told the **SHADOW**? Did Charles Manson really babysit his kids? Does it matter that he told a few tall tales? *Who really cares?*

What **does** matter is that Al Lewis was a man with a genuine personality who made a positive difference in the lives of others. Al Lewis the entertainer gave us joy and laughter in every venue, from the circus, burlesque and vaudeville, Broadway, radio, television and movies, to personal appearances at clubs and memorabilia shows. But much more importantly, Al Lewis, the strong-willed tough-as-nails astute activist who accepted no bullshit and suffered no fools, **acted** on his political beliefs.

Some of Al Lewis' long life of activism (that we can mention here) included reopening boarded up houses of evicted families in the 1940s and moving them back in, riding shotgun for Black leader WB Dubois in the 50s, hosting gatherings for Black Panthers at his home in the 60s, and confronting FCC censorship on behalf of shock jock Howard Stern in the 90s. Al also made a point of knowing and hanging out with interesting and diverse people, from comedian Fred Allen and humorist Bennett Cerf, to mafioso John Gotti and porn star Ron Jeremy.

In 1995, Al Lewis, with his wife Karen and fellow activist-entertainer Randy Credico, used his radio show **Al Lewis Live** on WBAI-FM in New York on Saturday afternoons to push for prisoners' rights, protest the death penalty, expose corrupt politicians, interview activists, promote books, and turn us on to great jazz (especially King Curtis)!

With Karen and Randy, Al Lewis was on the forefront of the movement to get New York's Rockefeller Drug Laws repealed, calling for the retroactive release of those imprisoned under those laws. (The Rockefeller Drug Laws, enacted in 1973 at the behest of then New York governor Nelson Rockefeller, require harsh prison terms for possession or sale of relatively small amounts of drugs.)

This effort included traveling with bus loads of activists to the state legislature in Albany to directly confront New York state lawmakers. On Fridays, Al Lewis would maintain a vigil with families of prisoners at Rockefeller Center in Manhattan. Running for governor of New York on the Green Party ticket in 1998, Al Lewis got the Greens on ballots across the state by garnering more than 50,000 votes. He also used his campaign to publicly pressure Governor Pataki and other state politicians into softening the Rockefeller laws somewhat, enabling many prisoners to be released.

Al Lewis was an avid reader of everything he could get his hands on, including the **SHADOW**. Imagine our delight when he agreed to an interview with us!! When we met with him at WBAI in 1997, I was surprised to see that he was a big man, contrary to the short image he portrayed as Grandpa on the Munsters tv show. As we interviewed him, he gave quite a performance, at times intimidating, encouraging, his voice rising, falling, rising again, with lots of laughter.

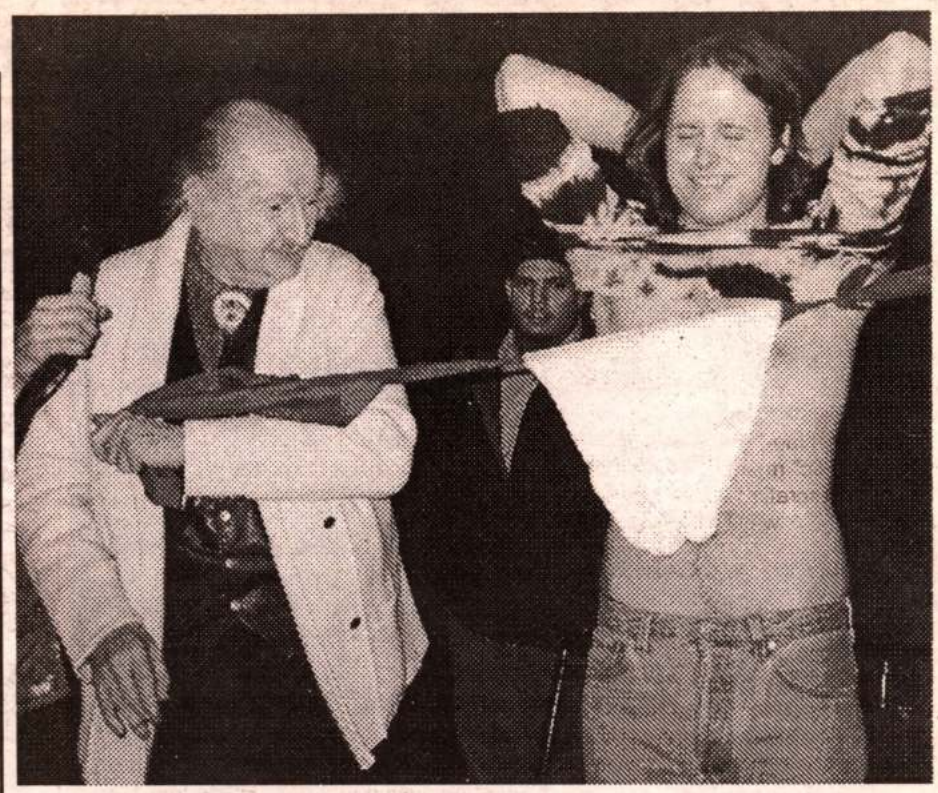
At the very end, I asked Al his secret for success and a long, healthy, happy life. At first, he laughed off the question, but then he got serious. He told us: "I'll tell you what my secret is. It took me a long time to find this out. Find something that you absolutely love to do. Not you like it, or it's pleasant -- something that you absolutely love to do. And along the way, if you're lucky, get to love the way you do it. Then you're home free. And you're looking at a man right now. I got a spine made out of stainless steel. **Nothing** shrinks it, **nothing**, nothing. Because I know who I am. I don't have to brag. I know what I contributed. I know what I did. You think you can do it better? Hey, go right ahead. The stage is yours. But find something that you absolutely love doing. And then get to love the way you do it. That's the uniqueness of all of us. That's it. Albert Einstein, one of my favorites, said: 'Imagination is more important than knowledge.' And if that cat can say it, it's good enough for me."

Two things from that interview have stayed with me ever since. First, that you must enjoy what you're doing if you really want to be happy in life. That sounds simple and obvious, but it's amazing how many people are unhappy and even miserable, locked into a job or lifestyle they don't really like, and it shows. Second, no matter what adversities we are facing now or in the future, Al Lewis' legacy should inspire us all to **stand up for something** and **make a difference**, even if we don't get the quick results we want. (It seems to me that one great way to honor the memory of Al Lewis is to force politicians in New York state to **completely** repeal the Rockefeller Drug Laws and release all those imprisoned since 1973 under those laws!!)

In the final analysis, what will you be able to say about what you did with **your** life? Can you look back and see that you did something meaningful? Do you just watch all the bullshit going on around you, knowing that something needs to be done, or do you at least **try** to do something about it, even if it seems hopeless? Al Lewis **did** something, without fear and without hesitation.

As Al told us in 1997: "The struggle goes on. The victory is in the struggle."
–Chris Flash

[You can read the entire **SHADOW** interview with Al Lewis from Issue #43 at: http://mediafilter.org/shadow/S43/S43grand.html]



PHOTOS BY CHRIS FLASH

Al Lewis pulls underwear out of volunteer's pants during magic trick on stage at Meow Mix bar in 1997

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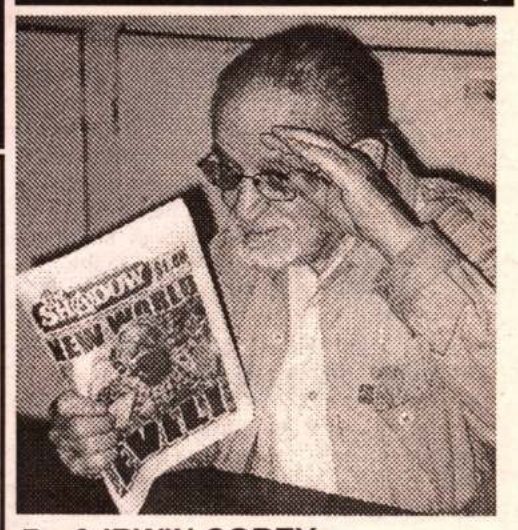

Prof. IRWIN COREY

Brought to you by: the May Day Organizing Committee, Don Yippie, the SHADOW and Those Fucking Anarchists!!

"The people can always be brought to the bidding of the leaders. That is easy. All you have to do is tell them they are being attacked and denounce the peacemakers for lack of patriotism and exposing the country to danger. It works the same in any country."
-- Nazi Reich Marshall Hermann Goering, at the Nuremberg War Crimes Trials, 1946

ROCKERS BAND TOGETHER TO SAVE CBGBs

LEGENDARY ROCK CLUB TO BE FORCED OUT BY LANDLORD

By Chris Flash, A. Kronstadt, Sarah Ferguson

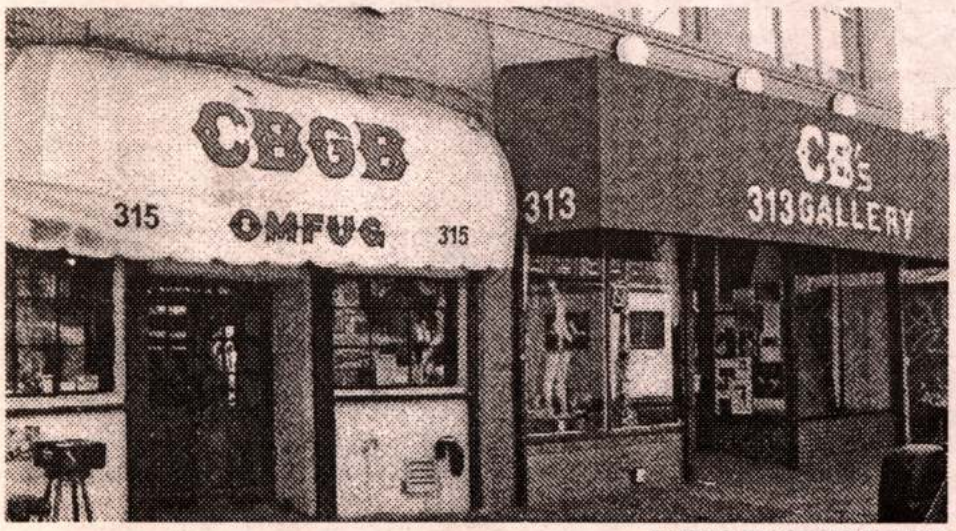

PHOTO BY CHRIS FLASH

As a result of its landlord's refusal to negotiate a new lease, legendary rock club CBGBs has announced that it will close indefinitely on October 31, 2006.

CBGBs (the letters of which stands for "Country, Blue Grass, Blues"), is world famous as the birthplace of punk music in the U.S. and has served as a launching pad for such groups as the Ramones, Blondie, Television, Talking Heads, Patti Smith, Richard Hell and the Voidoids, the Dead Boys, Reagan Youth, Murphy's Law and countless others, well known and not so well known.

In 1973, Hilly Kristal took over a former Hell's Angels hangout on the ground floor of the Palace Hotel, an infamous flophouse located at 313-315 Bowery. Over the following twenty years, with its policy of booking any bands wanting to play there, CBGBs became one of the most famous venues in the city for live alternative music.

Kristal considered buying the building in the early 1990s, when the Bowery was swimming in crack, but he couldn't afford the then roughly $4 million price tag. "I never had that kind of money," said Kristal, who still lives in a tiny rent-stabilized apartment around the corner. (He said that he has only started to turn a profit in recent years through CBGB Fashions, which sells t-shirts and other club merchandise.)

Around that time, the landlord, Palace Renaissance, Inc., turned over management of the building, along with neighboring 317 Bowery, to a group called the Bowery Residents Committee (BRC), a non-profit organization that runs a homeless shelter and drop-in center upstairs from the club, with a 45-year net lease on both properties.

Kristal speculates that the owners entered into the long-term lease with the BRC because it was the only way to rid themselves of troublesome SRO tenants. "I don't think anyone else but another homeless group could have dealt with it," he said.

Kristal was given a 12 year sublease and says that he remained "friendly" with the BRC until 2000, when they informed him that CBGBs' rent was more than $300,000 in arrears. Kristal blamed both his own and the BRC's lax accounting. Muzzy Rosenblatt, who took over as the BRC's executive director in 2000, conceded that the BRC had dropped the ball. "We're not a commercial landlord," he says of the BRC, which has evolved into a $30 million-a-year homeless-services provider, managing 23 programs in the city. After a seven-month court battle, CBGBs was ordered to pay roughly $223,000, in monthly installments.

On February 17, 2005, the BRC sent a "notice of default," demanding that Kristal pay $76,000 for back rent or face summary eviction. Kristal said that he could pay, but decided to hold off, as per the advice of his attorney. The back rent issue, Kristal felt, was the only bargaining position he had for renewing his lease, which was to terminate on August 31. "My position is, give me ten more years at a rate we can pay, and I'll get you the money now," said the 73-year-old Kristal from his cramped "office," a pair of old metal desks jammed in the club's entryway and plastered with the stickers of just about every band that has ever passed through. Kristal said that he can't afford to stay if the BRC doubled his rent from $19,000 to as much as $40,000 a month, which is what the BRC quoted him the year before. "The real thing is they don't want me back," Kristal said, adding that there had been a series of disagreements between him and the BRC over renovations and building code violations in recent years.

On August 1, a combination press conference and concert was held at CBGBs to launch the "Save CBGBs" campaign. The gathering was organized and chaired by veteran musician and actor Steve Van Zandt, formerly of the E-Street Band and more recently part of the cast of the Sopranos. Van Zandt called CBGBs "very simply the last rock and roll club left," and said that "CBGBs has historical significance because the genre of punk was created here."

Tommy Ramone told the crowd of over 200 CBs supporters: "When the Ramones first played here in the early 1970s, there was nothing here on the Bowery but CBGBs. Soon the scene developed and the Bowery started growing. Now, after 30 years, it has grown unnaturally. It's kind of ironic that the seeds of that growth were because the club allowed young talented musicians to create original music that nobody else allowed to be played. This is one of the last vestiges of what New York was, is and could be in the future." The press conference was followed by a concert that included performances by Debbie Harry, Jesse Malin, Star Spangles, Swingin' Neckbreakers, and Ted Leo + the Pharmacists.

On August 10, Judge Joan Kenney denied the BRC's request to evict CBGBs on the premise that it owed $91,000 in back rent, determining that the BRC failed to bill CBGBs properly. In her ruling, Judge Kenney declared: "CBGB has proven itself worthy of being recognized as a landmark [...] a rare achievement for any commercial tenant in the ever diverse and competitive real estate market of New York City." She went on to say, "It would be unconscionable for this court to allow the petitioner to proceed with its intent to evict CBGB [...] because it failed to notice that monies were outstanding for approximately four years."

The BRC's board of directors is composed of representatives from the city's largest real estate, financial and banking organizations, including Citigroup, JP Morgan Chase, Cushman Wakefield, American Express, Merill Lynch, Columbia University, and Goldman Sachs. These are among the most influential organizations in the city that have a vested interest in changing the demographics of certain neighborhoods as they gentrify them, driving real estate prices up and driving poor people out.

The BRC is exempt from income tax under Section 501(c) of the Internal Revenue Code and is eligible to receive contributions deductible as charitable donations for federal income tax purposes. However, according to its most recent IRS form 990 filing, the BRC has taken in $459,000 in rental income, in addition to the millions per year it has received in government grants. CBGBs supporters wonder if the BRC's ability to rent out a commercial space that it does not own on a "for profit" basis, in apparent violation of their not-for-profit status, is due to the influence of members on its board of directors.

As the August 31 lease termination date approached, Kristal made efforts to negotiate a new lease with the BRC that would address and resolve the BRC's concerns, but the BRC never responded to him. Other attempts by Kristal, including offering to find a third-party guarantor and raising money every year with benefit concerts, were also unsuccessful

When August 31 came and went, Kristal refused to close his doors, and continued to do business as usual. Unfortunately, a few months later, Kristal announced an agreement with the BRC, under which CBGBs would pay the BRC $35,000 per month rent for one year and then vacate the premises at the end of October, 2006.

It is not clear what Kristal intends to do after October. In December, he said that he is looking at potential locations for CBs in Manhattan and is considering Las Vegas as a site to open a sister club. "We're looking here and there, and we may have both places or we may only have one place," Kristal said.

PHOTO BY JACK DAWKINS

Hilly Kristal (Left) and Steven Van Zandt (Center) address gathering of supporters at CBGBs on August 1, 2005

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5C Café and Cultural Center Threatened By Landlord

By Bruce Morris

On the corner of Fifth Street and Avenue C sits the 5C Café and Cultural Center, (5C) - an unpretentious, friendly, home-like place. For more than ten years, my wife Trudy Silver and I have been in a legal struggle with a landlord who has tried everything to steal our space.

In 1981, 5C was an abandoned city-owned building. A group of us banded together as the 702 East Fifth Street Homesteaders Association in order to rehabilitate the building under a program sponsored by the city's Department of Housing, Preservation and Development (HPD). For many years, my homesteading work involved nearly 5,000 hours of labor known as sweat equity, overnight security against drug dealers and vandals, dealing with HPD's bureaucracy, paying monthly dues to the association for building materials and for the purchase of the building from the city of New York. I also helped obtain grants to hire contractors for work that required licensed trades people. For doing all of this, we were "guaranteed" a 99 year lease on a finished store front in order to create our dream: an affordable arts and education center.

Just before the building was purchased from the city, the association incorporated as 702 East Fifth Street Housing Development Fund Corporation and formed a co-op, becoming the landlord. The members of the co-op include Jemeel Moondoc, Gina Herring, Cathy Taylor, Marc Bonhomme, Stephanie Howard and Denise Gumora. The last four named did no physical work -- they bought their apartments after the renovations were done.

When renovation of the residential units was nearly complete in late 1986, the landlord challenged my right to the store front. Rather than lose everything I had worked for, in 1988, I acquiesced to accepting an unfinished store front with a 30 year lease, rather than the original lease deal I had been promised. The other association members got 99 year proprietary leases and finished spaces.

Soon after this, the landlord commenced a series of 'constructive eviction tactics. This is when a landlord tries to push out a tenant by denying basic rights under the lease and alleging that a tenant has violated his lease. In our case, these tactics have included the landlord's refusal to repair leaks for twelve years (many occurred during performances and tutoring classes); their refusal to sign building permits to enable us to install a heating system; illegal rent increases; numerous calls to the police complaining about performances and piano lessons. (concerts were at 4:00 in the afternoon) and calls to the fire department claiming that our space was another Happy Land [the illegal after hours social club in the Bronx where 87 people were killed in a 1990 fire–Ed].

It appears to us that the landlord's intent has been to exploit our labor and money and then force us out in order to capitalize on the commercial profits to be gained from our ground floor space.

In 1995, we went to the New York Supreme Court in an effort to stop the eviction attempt against us and get compensation. Unfortunately, we've been stuck with a terrible judge, Edward Lehner, who has denied us a trial and who, in open court, has said "I hate jazz."

The landlord claimed that we were operating an illegal social club and disturbing the residents. (Performances have been held from 4-7pm on Fridays, Saturdays and Sundays!) At the urging of the landlord, Judge Lehner put in place an illegal injunction that limits music beyond 7:00pm during the week and 9:00pm on weekends, and that allows only stringed instruments. Thanks to the great work of our legendary first amendment attorney Jerry Greenberg, the Appellate Division overturned the stringed instrument restriction as unconstitutional. A trial that will address the hours we can hold performances, as well as monetary damages, is still pending.

Despite all of the restrictions and eviction attempts, we have accomplished incredible things. Since 5C opened, we have presented over one thousand musical, dramatic, staged readings and poetry events. We tutor neighborhood kids in English, mathematics and Spanish. Trudy teaches affordable piano and voice lessons. We have made the space available and affordable (and sometimes free) as a meeting place for housing, anti-war, garden activists and performing artists.

We have yet to receive a grant from any organization. We have yet to operate in the black. Thousands of dollars have been spent on legal fees, and renovation costs, such as sound proofing, repairs from water damage, insurance, and we pay rent every month.

We need your help. We are preparing for trial within the year. There are many things that you can do that will help sustain this space. Come see our film documentary series on Wednesday nights, drink our fair trade coffee and enjoy healthy vegetarian food. Hold your parties and events here. We welcome creative ideas.

By supporting 5C Community and Cultural Center, you can help prevent this landlord from forcing us out. We don't need another Starbucks on Avenue C!

(Send tax deductible contributions payable to: 5C Cultural Center, P O Box 20666, New York, NY 10009. For more info, check out our site at: <http://5ccc.com/> or contact us at: <5cccafe@5ccc.com>)

LANDLORD GREED KILLS SECOND AVENUE DELI!!

By Chris Flash

After more than 50 years of operating in the same location at 158 Second Avenue, owner Jacob Lebewohl elected to close the world famous Second Avenue Deli last January, rather than complete planned renovations that would have added value to the building, due to the landlord's refusal to offer a reasonable rent. The deli had been facing a rent increase from an obscene $28,000 per month to an insane $33,000 per month.

In 1950, Jacob's brother Abraham, a Jewish immigrant from Ukraine, began working as a waiter in a 12-seat capacity coffee shop on Second Avenue and 10th Street. Four years later, Mr. Lebewohl and his family bought the tiny coffee shop, eventually expanding it to accommodate 250 people. Over the following decades, the Second Avenue Deli became renowned for its appetizing kosher foods and Eastern European and Ukrainian delicacies.

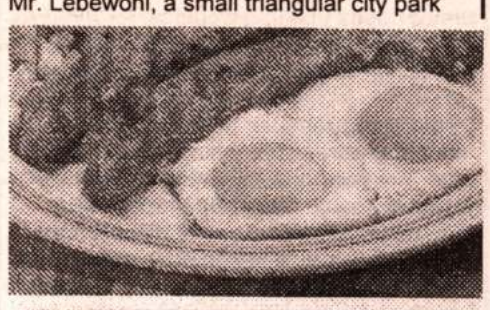
The Second Avenue Deli grew to be one of the best in the world, attracting luminaries and celebrities from everywhere, as well as regulars from the neighborhood. Mr. Lebewohl, called Abe or Abie by friends and customers, became known as "The Mayor of Second Avenue."

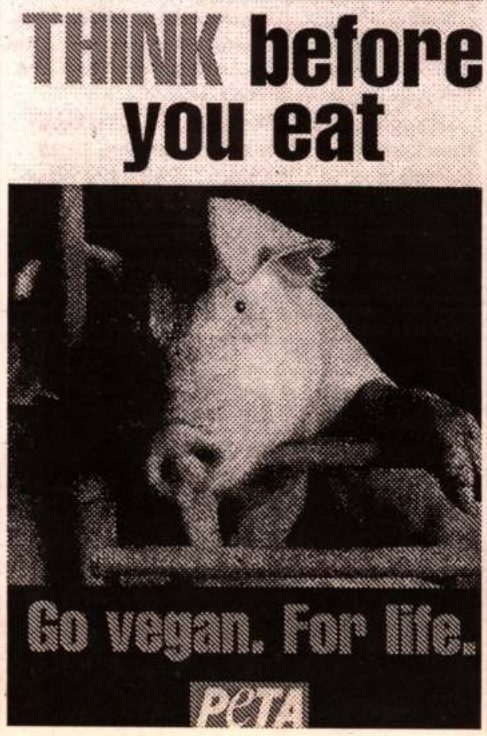
On March 4, 1996, Abe Lebewohl was shot and killed while on his way to the bank to make a deposit. To date, the NYPD has failed to find those responsible. In tribute to Mr. Lebewohl, a small triangular city park across the street from the Second Avenue Deli, next to St. Mark's Church, was officially renamed Abe Lebewohl Park in October 1996.

In August 2005, the current landlord, Jonis Realty, acquired 158 Second Avenue for $18.635 million, as part of a $93 million real estate portfolio purchased from the Wilpon family, which shrewdly sold its real estate holdings at the peak of the market. Owners of the NY Mets baseball team, the Wilpons are currently in the process of obtaining City Council approval for a new tax payer-subsidized Mets stadium to be built next to Shea stadium in Flushing, Queens.

One of the buildings in the Wilpon portfolio purchased by Jonis, located at 157 Second Avenue, across the street from the Second Avenue Deli, contains a now vacant storefront that was once the location of a pizzeria that closed down two months after attempting to do business there at $14,000 per month rent. Just to cover that rent, the pizzeria would have had to sell more than 233 slices per day every day of the week, at $2.00 per slice, assuming that those 233 slices cost the pizzeria **nothing** to make!!

The former Second Avenue Deli space has been sitting vacant since January. A "For Rent" banner can be seen in the window, hoping to attract a new sucker to offset the deficit that the new owners are no doubt experiencing at 158 Second Avenue.





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OPEC AND THE ECONOMIC CONQUEST OF IRAQ

Why Iraq Still Sells Its Oil à la Cartel + Twilight of the Neocon Gods

By Greg Palast

(On October 22, 2005, Greg Palast and his co-author, the Rev. Jesse Jackson, received a Project Censored award, the "alternative Pulitzer Prize," for their report, JIM CROW RETURNS TO THE VOTING BOOTH: DOES AMERICA HAVE AN APARTHEID VOTE-COUNTING SYSTEM? The Palast investigative team received a second award for uncovering the State Department's confidential pre-war plans for the economic con-quest of Iraq. By special arrangement with Harper's magazine, we are reproducing here for the first time the entire updated article on the US government's secret schemes for seizing control of the oil fields of Iraq)

TWO AND A HALF YEARS AND $202 BILLION into the war in Iraq, the United States has at least one significant new asset to show for it: effective membership, through our control of Iraq's energy policy, in the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC), the Arab-dominated oil cartel.

Just what to do with this proxy power has been, almost since President Bush's first inaugural, the cause of a pitched battle between neoconservatives at the Pentagon, on the one hand, and the State Department and the oil industry, on the other. At issue is whether Iraq will remain a member in good standing of OPEC, upholding production limits and thereby high prices, or a mutinous spoiler that could topple the Arab oligopoly.

According to insiders and to documents obtained from the State Department, the neocons, once in command, are now in full retreat. Iraq's system of oil production, after a year of failed free-market experimentation, is being re-created almost entirely on the lines originally laid out by Saddam Hussein.

Under the quiet direction of U.S. oil company executives working with the State Department, the Iraqis have discarded the neocon vision of a laissez faire, privatized oil operation in favor of one shackled to quotas set by OPEC, which have been key to the 148% rise in oil prices since the beginning of 2002. This rise is estimated to have cost the U.S. economy 1.5% of its GNP, or a third of its total growth during the period.

Given this economic blow, and given that OPEC states account for 46% of America's oil imports, it may seem odd that the United States' "remaking" of Iraq would allow for a national oil company that props up OPEC's price gouging. And, in fact, the original scheme for reconstruction, at least the one favored by neo-conservatives, was to privatize Iraq's oil entirely and thereby undermine the oil cartel. One intellectual godfather of this strategy was Ariel Cohen of the Heritage Foundation, who, in September 2002, published (with Gerald P. O'Driscoll, Jr.) a post-invasion plan, "The Road to Economic Prosperity for a Post-Saddam Iraq," that put forward the idea of using Iraq to smash OPEC. Cohen explained to me how such an extraordinary geopolitical feat might be accomplished. OPEC maintains high oil prices by suppressing production through a quota system effectively imposed on each member by Saudi Arabia, which reigns by dint of its overwhelming reserves. The Saudis, to maintain their control on pricing, must keep a lid on production from other members--particularly Iraq, which has the second greatest proven reserves.

Under Saddam Hussein, Iraq adhered to the OPEC quota limit (historically set to equal Iran's, now at 3.96 million barrels a day) via state ownership of all fields. Cohen reasoned that if Iraq's fields were broken up and sold off, a dozen competing operators would quickly crank up production from their individual patches to the maximum possible, swiftly raising Iraq's total output to 6 million barrels a day. This extra crude would flood world petroleum markets, OPEC would devolve into mass cheating and over-production, oil prices would fall over a cliff, and Saudi Arabia--both economically and politically--would fall to its knees.

By February 2003, Cohen's position had been enshrined as official policy, in the form of a hundred-page blueprint for the occupied nation titled, "Moving the Iraqi Economy from Recovery to Sustainable Growth"--a plan that generally embodied the principles for postwar Iraq favored by Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld, Deputy Secretary Paul Wolfowitz, and Iran-Contra figure Elliott Abrams, now Deputy National Security Adviser. Nominally written by a committee of Defense, State, and Treasury officials, the blueprint was in fact the brainchild of a platoon of corporate lobbyists, chief among them the flat tax fanatic Grover Norquist. From overhauling tax rates to rewriting copyright law, the document mapped out a radical makeover of Iraq as a free-market Xanadu--a sort of Chile on the Tigris--including, on page 73, the sell-off of the nation's crown jewels: "privatization... [of] the oil and supporting industries."

Following the U.S. military's swift advance to Baghdad, those skeptical of the neocon plan were summarily brushed aside. Chief among the castoffs was General Jay Garner, the shortlived occupation viceroy who, on the very night he arrived in Baghdad from Kuwait, received a call from Rumsfeld informing him of his dismissal. When I met with Garner last March at the Washington offices of L3 Corporation's giant security subsidiary he now heads, the general told me that he had resisted imposing on Iraqis the plan's sell-off of assets, especially the oil. "That's just one fight you don't have to take on right now," he said. "You don't want to end the day with more enemies than you started with."

In plotting the destruction of OPEC, the neocons failed to predict the virulent resistance of insurgent forces: the U.S. oil industry itself. From the outset of the planning for war, U.S. oil executives had thrown in their lot with the pragmatists at the State Department and the National Security Council. Within weeks of the first inaugural, prominent Iraqi expatriates--many with ties to U.S. industry--were invited to secret discussions directed by Pamela Quanrud, an National Security Council (NSC) economics expert now employed by the State Department. "It quickly became an oil group," one participant, Falah Aljibury, told me. Aljibury, an adviser to Amerada Hess's oil trading arm and to investment banking giant Goldman Sachs, who once served as a back channel between the United States and Iraq during the Reagan and George H. W. Bush administrations, cut ties to the Hussein regime following the invasion of Kuwait.

The working group's ideas about the war had been far less starry-eyed than those of the neocons. "The petroleum industry, the chemical industry, the banking industry--they'd hoped that Iraq would go for a revolution like in the past and government was shut down for two or three days," Aljibury told me. "You have a martial law ...and say Iraq is being liberated and everybody stay where they are....Everything as is." On this plan, Hussein would simply have been replaced by some former Baathist general. One candidate was General Nizar Khazraji, Saddam's former army chief of staff, who at the time was under house arrest in Denmark pending charges for war crimes. (Khazraji was seen in Iraq a month after the U.S. invasion, but he soon disappeared and has not been heard from since.)

Roughly six months before the invasion, the Bush Administration designated Philip Carroll to advise the Iraqi Oil Ministry once U.S. tanks entered Baghdad. Carroll had been CEO of both Fluor Corporation, now a major contractor in Iraq, and, earlier, of Royal Dutch/Shell's U.S. division. In May 2003, a month after his arrival in Iraq, Carroll made headlines when he told the *Washington Post* that Iraq might break with OPEC: "[Iraqis] have from time to time, because of compelling national interest, elected to opt out of the quota system and pursue their own path...They may elect to do that same thing. To me, it's a very important national question." Carroll later told me, though, that he personally would not have been supportive of privatizing oil fields. "Nobody in their right mind would have thought of doing that," he said.

Soon after Carroll resigned his post in September 2003, the new provisional government appointed an oil minister, Ibrahim Bahr al-Uloum. Uloum (who had been maneuvered into the job by then-neocon favorite Ahmad Chalabi) quickly fired Muhammad al-Jiburi, chief of Iraq's State Oil Marketing Organization, and Thamer Ghadhban, the expert in charge of the southern oil fields, both of whom had been trusted by the Western oil industry. Production faltered from a combination of incompetence, wholesale theft (Iraq's oil was unmetered), sabotage, and corruption that one oilman told me was "rampant," with "direct payoffs to government officials by commercial operators."

With pipelines exploding daily, the fantasy of remaking Iraq's oil industry also went up in flames. Carroll was replaced by another Houston oil chieftain, Rob McKee, a former executive vice-president of ConocoPhillips and currently the chairman--even during his tenure in Baghdad--of Enventure, an oil-drilling supply subsidiary of the Halliburton Corporation. McKee had little tolerance for the neocons' threat to privatize the oil fields. A close associate of McKee's and the executive adviser to Hess's trading arm, Ed Morse, told me that "Rob was very promotive of putting in place a really strong national oil company," even if he had to act over the objections of the Iraqi Governing Council. Morse, who says he takes as many as six calls a day from the Bush Administration regarding Iraq, is one of the men to whom Washington turns to obtain the views of Big Oil. Like Carroll and McKee, Morse sneers at what he calls "the obsession of neoconservative writers on ways to undermine OPEC." Iraqis, says Morse, know that if they pump 6 million barrels a day, i.e., 2 million above their expected OPEC quota, "they will crash the oil market" and bring down their own economy.

In November 2003, McKee quietly ordered up a new plan for Iraq's oil. The drafting would be overseen by a "senior adviser," Amy Jaffe, who had worked for Morse when he held the formidable title of Chairman of the Council on Foreign Relations-James Baker III Institute Joint Committee on Petroleum Security. Jaffe now works for Baker, the former Secretary of State, whose law firm serves as counsel to both Exxon/Mobil and the defense minister of Saudi Arabia. The plan, nominally written by State Department contractor BearingPoint, was guided, says Jaffe, by a handful of oil industry consultants and executives.

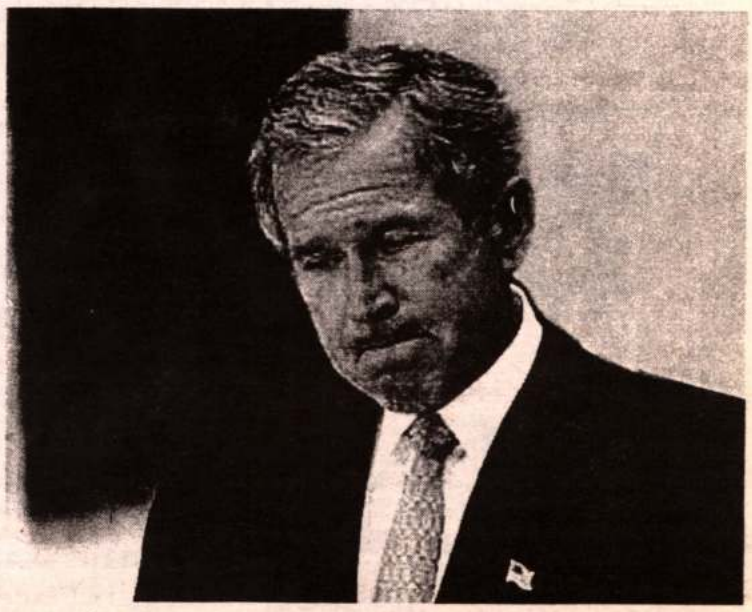
For months, the State Department officially denied the existence of this 323-page plan for Iraq's oil, but when I identified the document's title from my sources and threatened legal action, I was able to obtain the complete report, dated December 2003 and entitled "Options for Developing a Long Term Sustainable Iraqi Oil Industry." The multi-volume document describes seven possible models of oil production for Iraq, each one merely a different flavor of a single option: the creation of a state-owned oil company. The seven options ranged from the Saudi Aramco model, in which the government owns the whole operation from reserves to pipelines, to the Azerbaijan model, in which the state-owned assets are operated almost entirely by "IOCs" (International Oil Companies). The drafters had little regard for the "self-financing" system, such as Saudi Arabia's, which bars IOCs from the fields; they prefer the production-sharing agreement (PSA) model, under which the state maintains official title to the reserves, but operation and control are given to foreign oil companies. These companies then manage, fund, and equip crude extraction in exchange for a percentage of sales receipts.

While promoting IOC control of the fields, the authors take care to warn the Iraqi government against attempting to squeeze IOC profits: "Countries that do not offer risk-adjusted rates of return equal to or above other nations will be unlikely to achieve significant levels of investment, regardless of the richness of their geology." Indeed, to outbid other nations for Big Oil's favor will require Iraq to turn over quite a large share of profits, especially when competing against countries such as Azerbaijan that have given away the store. The Azeri government, notes the report, has "been able to partially overcome their risk profile and attract billions of dollars of investment by offering a contractual balance of commercial interests within the risk contract." This refers to the fact that Azerbaijan, despite its poor oil quality and poor location, drew in the IOCs via scandalous splits of revenue allowed by the nation's corrupt government.

Given how easily the interests of OPEC and those of the IOCs can be aligned, it is certainly understandable why smashing the oil cartel would not strike oilmen as a good idea. In 2004, with oil approaching the $50-a-barrel mark all year, the major U.S. oil companies posted record or near record profits. ConocoPhillips, Rob McKee's company, in February 2005, reported a doubling of its quarterly profits from the previous year, which itself had been a company record; Carroll's former employer, Shell, posted a

Continued on Page 21

QUESTION:
WHY ARE 40 MILLION AMERICANS WITHOUT HEALTH CARE?



ANSWER:
BOMB IRAQ.

THE NEW WORLD OIL ORDER

No More Cheap Oil, Says Hugo Chavez

By Greg Palast
(http://www.GregPalast.com)
Reporting for BBC Newsnight TV

If you thought high oil prices were just a blip, think again. In an exclusive interview with Greg Palast for BBC Newsnight, Venezuelan President Hugo Chavez has ruled out any return to the era of cheap oil.

The colorful Venezuelan leader hosts the OPEC meeting on June 1 in Caracas and he will ask OPEC to set $50 a barrel--the average price last year--as the long term level. During the 1990s, the price of oil had hovered around the $20 mark, falling as low as $10 a barrel in early 1999.

Chavez told Newsnight "we're trying to find an equilibrium. The price of oil could remain at the low level of $50. That's a fair price, it's not a high price." Hugo Chavez will have added clout at this OPEC meeting.

US Department of Energy (DoE) analyses seen by Newsnight show that at $50 a barrel, Venezuela--not Saudi Arabia--will have the biggest oil reserves in OPEC. Venezuela has vast deposits of extra heavy oil in the Orinoco. Traditionally, these have not been counted because at $20 a barrel, they were too expensive to exploit--but at $50 a barrel, melting them into liquid petroleum becomes extremely profitable.

The DoE report shows that at today's prices, Venezuela's oil reserves are bigger than those of the entire Middle East, including Saudi Arabia, the Gulf states, Iran and Iraq. The DoE also identifies Canada as another future oil superpower. Venezuela's deposits alone could extend the oil age for another 100 years.

The DoE estimates that Chavez controls 1.3 trillion barrels of oil--more than the entire declared oil reserves of the rest of the planet. Hugo Chavez told Newsnight: "Venezuela has the largest oil reserves in the world. In the future, Venezuela won't have any more oil--but that's in the 22nd century. Venezuela has oil for 200 years." Chavez will ask the OPEC meeting in June to formally accept that Venezuela's reserves are now bigger than Saudi Arabia's.

Chavez's increased muscle will not go down well in Washington. In 2002, the Bush administration welcomed an attempted coup against Chavez. He told Newsnight that the Americans had organized it in an attempt to get hold of Venezuela's oil.

Ironically, by invading Iraq, George Bush has boosted oil prices and effectively transferred billions of dollars from American consumers to Chavez. Up to $200 million a day--half of it from the US--is flooding into Caracas. Chavez is spending this on building infrastructure and increasing the minimum wage and improving health and education in the poor ranchos which surround the cities. As a result, even his opponents accept that Chavez is extremely popular and will easily win the next Presidential election in December.

Chavez is also spending billions in the rest of Latin America, exchanging contracts for oil tankers and infrastructure projects and buying up loans in Argentina and Brazil. He has made cheap oil deals with Ecuador and the Caribbean.

Chavez has also spent some of the dollars which have come in from the US supporting Fidel Castro in Cuba. In return, Cuba has supplied the thousands of doctors and teachers who are transforming conditions in the barrios of Caracas. Washington accuses Chavez of buying influence in Latin America.

VENEZUELAN PRESIDENT HUGO CHAVEZ

The Newsnight team had to endure the long speeches and marathon six hour TV shows which Hugo Chavez delights in. Chavez posed for Newsnight with the sword of Simon Bolivar the 18th century liberator who drove out Spanish imperialists from South America. The symbolism was clear, but behind the showman is a clever political brain.

Chavez has not invaded any foreign countries. He does not have secret prisons at home or abroad. Chavez has repeatedly won democratic elections and the opposition operates freely, although some members have been charged with accepting illegal foreign donations. Nonetheless, George Bush's administration repeatedly targets Chavez on human rights and finances his opponents.

Earlier this year, US Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld compared Chavez to Adolph Hitler--because he was elected democratically--and last year, the influential American evangelist Pat Robertson called for his assassination. Robertson later apologized and said that Chavez did not "necessarily" have to be killed, so long as he was kidnapped by American special forces.

Chavez told Newsnight that he was still concerned that George Bush had not learned the lessons of Iraq and would order an invasion to try to secure Venezuela's oil. "I pray this will not happen because US soldiers will bite the dust and so will we, Venezuelans." He warned that any such attempt would lead to a prolonged guerilla war and an end to oil production. "The US people should know there will be no oil for anyone."

Chavez does not accept British Prime Minister Tony Blair's criticism of him for lining up with Fidel Castro. He told Newsnight "if someone is sleeping together, it is Bush and Blair. They share the same bed."

(Special thanks to Matt Pascarella, Leni von Eckardt, and Richard Rowley for their research and production assistance on this report.)

[Also see The Guardian story about the report at: <http://business.guardian.co.uk/story/0,,1745467,00.html>. [Read, "The Assassination of Hugo Chavez," in Greg Palast's new book, "ARMED MADHOUSE: Dispatches from the Front Lines of the Class War," to be released by Penguin Dutton on June 6. Pre-order it today or donate to Palast Investigative Fund for a personally signed copy at: <http://www.gregpalast.com/armed madhouse/preorder.html>. View Palast's investigative reports for Harper's Magazine and BBC Television's Newsnight at <http://www.Greg Palast.com>]

SOUTH AMERICAN PIPELINE WARS

Chavez Bloc Races with Oil Cartel to Grid the Continent – Ecologists and Locals Fear Chavez Plans Will Damage the Environment

By Bill Weinberg

(World War 4 Report <http://www.ww4report.com>)

As the left-populist Evo Morales takes office in Bolivia, a clear anti-imperialist bloc is consolidating in South America, led by Venezuela's Hugo Chavez, which includes Brazil, Argentina, Uruguay and Chile. On January 19, days before Morales was inaugurated, Chavez and other regional leaders met in Brasilia to announce ambitious plans for new gas and oil pipelines spanning the continent, linking national markets across vast areas of rainforest and towering mountains.

Now a race is on between a series of pipeline projects already being developed under the auspices of multinational corporations and the proposal unveiled at Brasilia: the first predicated on extracting resources from South America with the minimum return to the continent's inhabitants; the other on harnessing those resources to lift the continent's masses out of poverty.

The corporate projects invariably link oilfields in the continental interior--the Amazon and Orinoco basins--with the Pacific and Caribbean coasts for export to the United States. The Cano-Limon pipeline, run by a consortium led by California's Occidental Petroleum, links Colombia's Arauca oilfields in the Orinoco with the Caribbean. To the south, the Putumayo-Tumaco line links the new oilfields of the Colombian Amazon to the Pacific, with Petrobank Energy of Canada a major investor. In Ecuador, the new Heavy Crude Oilduct (OCP) similarly spans the Andes, linking Amazon oilfields to the coast, with Occidental again a leading member of the consortium. In Peru, the Camisea pipeline, built by Halliburton for a consortium led by Hunt Oil of Texas, has just gone on line, again linking Amazon gasfields to the coast. All of these projects have met with long protest campaigns by impacted indigenous and campesino communities. And another such project, a proposed gas line linking the Bolivian Amazon to the Chilean coast, to be built by Sempra Energy of California, was effectively canceled by the Bolivian indigenous uprising of October 2003.

The main pillar of the Chavez plan, in contrast, does not link the Amazon to the sea, but crosses the Amazon to link the South American nations to one another. The proposed arteries that would reach the sea envision exports not to the US, but to China.

The plan is also seen as a move toward establishment of a regional joint venture of state-sector oil companies, to be dubbed PetroAmerica, which would integrate Latin America and the Caribbean on principles of self-sufficiency, and re-invest profits into development and social programs.

At the Second Bolivarian Congress of Peoples, a pan-Latin American summit of social and political leaders that Chavez hosted in December 2004, Evo Morales said: "We dream that PetroAmerica can be consolidated... Why can't PetroAmerica have partners like China and Bolivia to stop the North American empire? It's important to advance these economic proposals to liberate our peoples... Enough of foreign people who come to dominate us, and to subjugate us and make themselves the owners of our lands."

On Morales' pre-inauguration trip to Venezuela, he and Chavez announced plans to merge their respective countries' state energy sectors as a first step towards the creation of PetroAmerica. At the January 19 Brasilia meeting, Chavez, Brazilian President Luiz ("Lula") Inacio da Silva and Argentine President Nestor Kirchner agreed to move ahead with a planned gas pipeline running the length of the continent. The proposed pipeline would stretch 10,000 kilometers (6,215 miles)--more than three times the length of the US-Mexico border. It would take seven years to build and cost up to $20 billion, according to Venezuela's Energy and Oil Minister Rafael Ramirez.

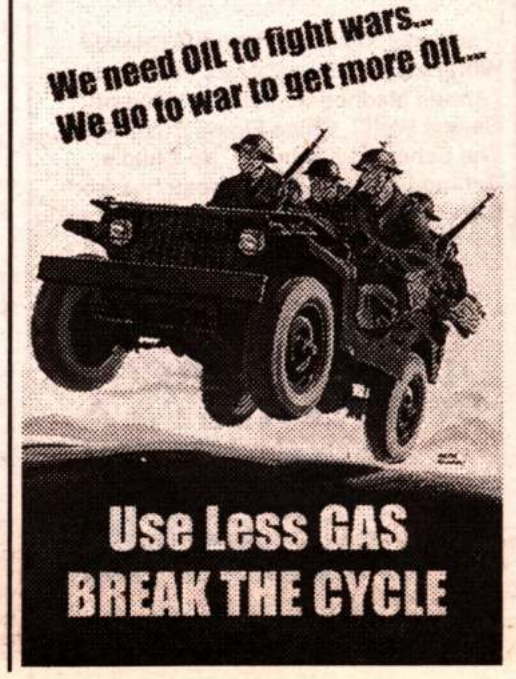
"We are moving forward with tremendous political will to make this project a reality," Ramirez told *Bloomberg News*, adding that the pipeline would be the "spinal cord" of South America. The line would start at Venezuela's Caribbean coast and run through Brazil before reaching Argentina, dissecting the Amazon Basin. The plan envisions using Venezuela's 150 trillion cubic feet of natural gas reserves, the world's eighth-largest, to help resolve chronic gas shortages in Argentina.

Chavez is also preparing an unprecedented thrust of domestic expansion in the oil sector. Venezuela's state oil company, PDVSA, has announced plans to reach crude production levels of 5.8 million barrels per day by 2012 and 7.5 million barrels per day by 2020. PDVSA also intends to invest $3 billion into expanding its refining capacity, and form strategic alliances to use refineries in other Caribbean and South American countries. With reserves estimated at more than 77 billion barrels, Venezuela is hoping to surpass even Saudi Arabia as a global supplier.

But apart from the daunting costs and technical challenges of the Chavez pipeline vision, there are clear political obstacles. Some observers believe that the proposed network's competition with the pipelines already pumping or under construction will have a destabilizing effect on the new South American bloc. A perhaps more fundamental contradiction is that indigenous and campesino communities, whose lands stand in the path of Chavez' proposed pipelines, could find themselves facing the same kinds of pressures they now face before the corporate mega-projects, thus undermining a crucial constituency of the region's left-populist governments.

One of the new arteries to the Pacific under Chavez's vision would export Venezuelan hydrocarbons to China through Colombia. The proposed new pipeline links between Colombia and Venezuela would have

Continued On Page 21



THE SPIES WHO SHAG US

The Times and USA Today have Missed the Bigger Story -- Again

By Greg Palast

I know you're shocked--SHOCKED!--that George Bush is listening in on all your phone calls. Without a warrant. That's nothing. And it's not news.

This is: the snooping into your phone bill is just the snout of the pig of a strange, lucrative link-up between the Administration's Homeland Security spy network and private companies operating beyond the reach of the laws meant to protect us from our government. You can call it the privatization of the FBI--though it is better described as the creation of a private KGB.

The leader in the field of what is called "data mining," is a company, formed in 1997, called, **"ChoicePoint, Inc,"** which has sucked up over a billion dollars in national security contracts.

Worried about Dick Cheney listening in Sunday on your call to Mom? That ain't nothing. You should be more concerned that they are linking this info to your medical records, your bill purchases and your entire personal profile including, not incidentally, your voting registration. Five years ago, I discovered that ChoicePoint had already gathered 16 billion data files on Americans--and I know they've expanded their ops at an explosive rate.

They are paid to keep an eye on you--because the FBI can't. For the government to collect this stuff is against the law unless you're suspected of a crime. (The law in question is the Constitution.) But ChoicePoint can collect if for "commercial" purchases--and under the Bush Administration's suspect reading of the Patriot Act--our domestic spying apparatchiks can then BUY the info from ChoicePoint.

Who ARE these guys selling George Bush a piece of you?

ChoicePoint's board has more Republicans than a Palm Beach country club. It was funded, and its board stocked, by such Republican sugar daddies as billionaires Bernie Marcus and Ken Langone--even after Langone was charged by the Securities Exchange Commission with abuse of inside information.

I first ran across these guys in 2000 in Florida when our Guardian/BBC team discovered the list of 94,000 "felons" that Katherine Harris had ordered removed from Florida's voter rolls before the election. Virtually every voter purged was innocent of any crime except, in most cases, Voting While Black. Who came up with this electoral hit list that gave Bush the White House? ChoicePoint, Inc.

And worse, they KNEW the racially-tainted list of felons was bogus. And when we caught them, they lied about it. While they've since apologized to the NAACP, ChoicePoint's ethnic cleansing of voter rolls has been amply assuaged by the man the company elected.

And now ChoicePoint and George Bush want your blood. Forget your phone bill. ChoicePoint, a sickened executive of the company told us in confidence, "hope[s] to build a database of DNA samples from every person in the United States...linked to all the other information held by CP [ChoicePoint]" from medical to voting records.

And ChoicePoint lied about that too. The company publicly denied they gave DNA to the Feds--but then told our investigator, pretending to seek work, that ChoicePoint was "the number one" provider of DNA info to the FBI.

"And that scares the hell out of me," said the executive (who has since left the company), because ChoicePoint gets it WRONG so often. We are not contracting out our Homeland Security to James Bond here. It's more like Austin Powers, Inc. Besides the 97% error rate in finding Florida "felons," Illinois State Police fired the company after discovering ChoicePoint had produced test "results" on rape case evidence...that didn't exist. And ChoicePoint just got hit with the largest fine in Federal Trade Commission history for letting identity thieves purchase 145,000 credit card records.

But it won't stop, despite Republican senators shedding big crocodile tears about "surveillance" of innocent Americans. That's because FEAR is a lucrative business--not just for ChoicePoint, but for firms such as Syntech, Sybase and Lockheed-Martin--each of which has provided lucrative posts or profits to connected Republicans including former Total Information Awareness chief John Poindexter (Syntech), Marvin Bush (Sybase) and Lynn Cheney (Lockheed-Martin).

But how can they get Americans to give up our personal files, our phone logs, our DNA and our rights? Easy. Fear sells better than sex--and they want you to be afraid. Back to the May 12 New York Times, page 28: "Wider Use of DNA Lists is Urged in Fighting Crime." And who is providing the technology? It comes, says the Times, from the work done on using DNA fragments to identify victims of the September 11 attacks. And who did that job (for $12 million, no bid)? ChoicePoint, Inc. Which is NOT mentioned by the Times.

"Genetic surveillance would thus shift from the individual [the alleged criminal] to the family," says the Times--which will require, of course, a national DNA database of NON-criminals.

It doesn't end there. Turn to the same newspaper, page 23, with a story about a weird new law passed by the state of Georgia to fight illegal immigration. Every single employer and government agency will be required to match citizen or worker data against national databases to affirm citizenship. It won't stop illegal border crossing, but hey, someone's going to make big bucks on selling data. And guess what local boy owns the data mine? ChoicePoint, Inc., of Alpharetta, Georgia.

The knuckleheads at the Times don't put the three stories together because the real players aren't in the press releases their reporters re-write.

But that's the Fear Industry for you. You aren't safer from terrorists or criminals or "felon" voters. But the national wallet is several billion dollars lighter and the Bill of Rights is a couple amendments shorter.

And that's their program. They get the data mine--and we get the shaft.

(For the full story, see **"Double Cheese With Fear,"** in Greg Palast's latest book **"Armed Madhouse: Who's Afraid of Osama Wolf?, China Floats Bush Sinks, The Scheme to Steal '08, No Child's Behind Left and Other Dispatches from the Front Lines of the Class War,"** coming out on June 6--you can or der it now.)

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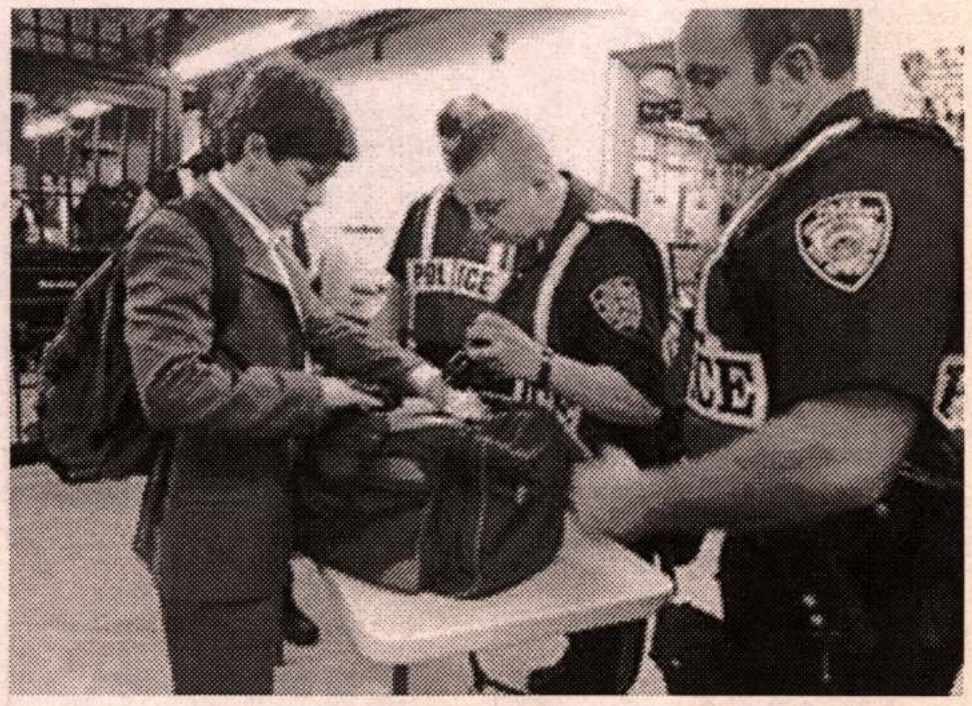
SUBWAY SEARCHES:

(SOME) NEW YORKERS RESIST BIG BROTHER

By Bill Weinberg



The New York Civil Liberties Union (NYCLU) is suing the city on behalf of a group of subway riders to keep police from searching the bags of passengers entering the transit system. The suit, filed in U.S. District Court in Manhattan last August, claims the policy violates constitutional guarantees of equal protection and prohibitions against unlawful searches and seizures--while doing almost nothing to protect the city from terrorism. "While concerns about terrorism of course justify--indeed, require–aggressive police tactics, those concerns cannot justify the Police Department's unprecedented policy of subjecting millions of innocent people to suspicionless searches," the suit states.

Among the five plaintiffs is Brendan MacWade, 32, of Brooklyn, who escaped the Twin Towers after they were struck on September 11, 2001. "I want to catch terrorists as much as any politicians or officials, but this policy does not work," he told the press.

Another plaintiff, Joseph Gehring Jr., who identifies himself as a lifelong Republican, said he was disappointed to find subway riders accepting the police searches. "Here we were giving up our rights to what was obviously a publicity stunt," he said. "We are becoming accustomed to having our civil liberties taken away."

Gail Donoghue, a city lawyer, said that the city's policy of random subway searches, instituted after July's deadly bombings on the London Underground, "meets all appropriate legal requirements and preserves the important balance between protecting our city and preserving individual rights... We are confident our position will prevail in court."

The city is named as a defendant, along with the NYPD and Police Commissioner Ray Kelly.

The suit was filed as elected officials tussled over racial profiling on the subways. Nine City Council members have asked Mayor Bloomberg to direct officers to note the racial or ethnic identity of people searched. The call came after a city councilman and a state assemblyman suggested that young Arabs should be targeted for searches. "The mayor has repeatedly stated since the start of this policy that there would be zero tolerance for racial profiling," said a spokesman for Bloomberg. At an August press conference opposing the profiling were City Councilman John Liu of Queens and Sikh Coalition legal director Amardeep Singh.

The two officials who led the call for targeting Arabs for subway searches were James Oddo of Staten Island, leader of the small Republican minority on the City Council, and Assemblyman Dov Hikind of Brooklyn, a conservative Democrat, who said: "They all look a certain way. It's all very nice to be politically correct here, but we're talking about terrorism."

Ironically, the law-and-order hardliner Hikind traveled to Israel that same month to join infiltrators who snuck through army roadblocks into the Gaza Strip to resist Israel's disengagement from the occupied Palestinian territory. His action was in violation of Israeli law, and in defense of an occupation that violated international law. On August 14, when Hikind was in Gaza, a group of Orthodox Jews led by Rabbi Yisroel Dovid Weiss held a press conference on the steps of City Hall to protest Hikind's call for racial profiling.

On December 2, the first ruling in the NYCLU case came down. "The risk of a terrorist bombing of New York City's subway system is real and substantial," U.S. District Judge Richard M. Berman said in a 41-page decision tossing out the lawsuit.

Citing testimony that up to 50 percent of terrorist acts were directed at transportation systems, Judge Berman said the need to implement counterterrorism measures was "indisputable, pressing, on-going and evolving." Berman called the searches effective.

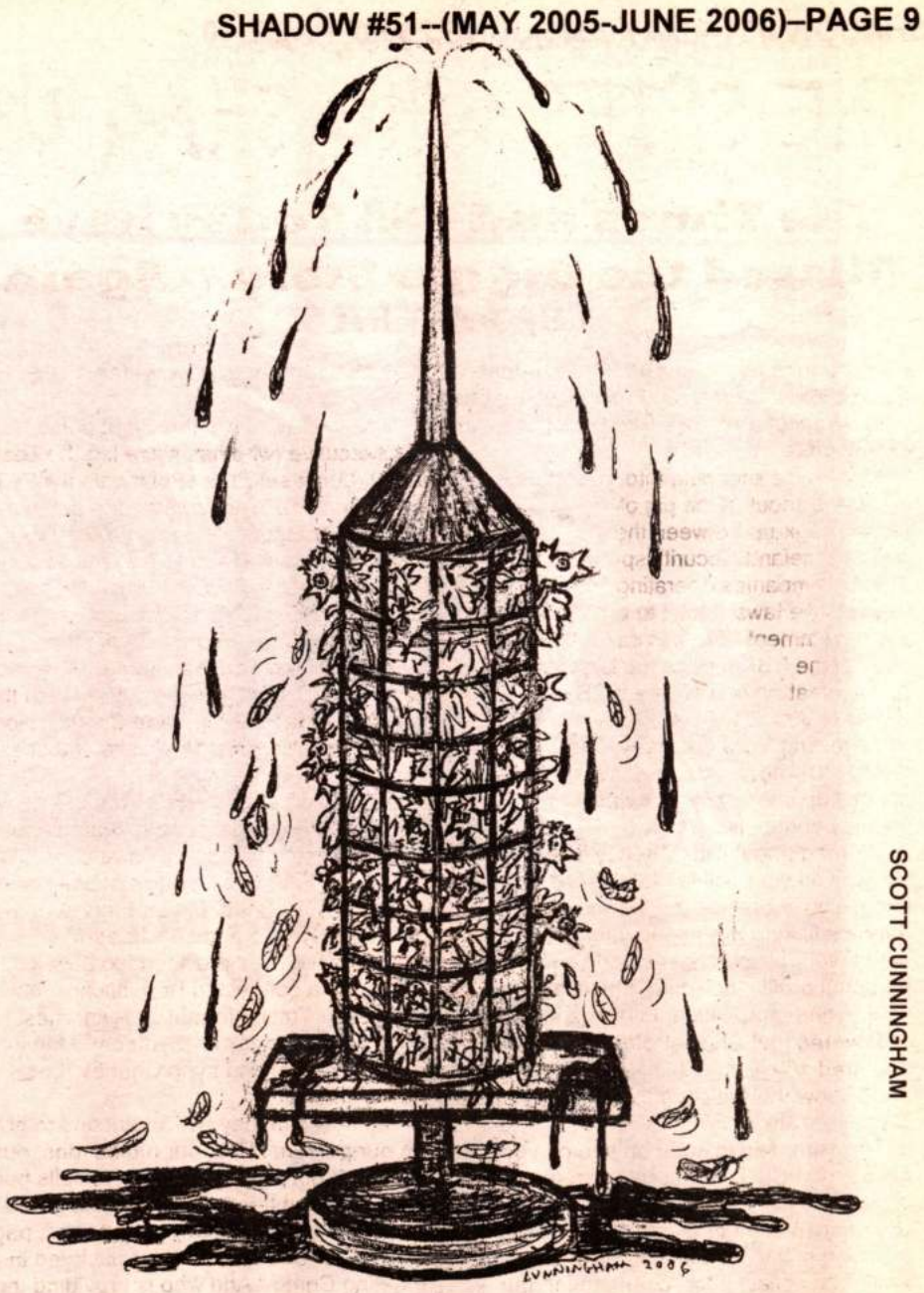
"Common sense prevails," Commissioner Kelly said after the ruling. NYCLU Legal Director Christopher Dunn said: "We remain confident that this program is unconstitutional and we intend to appeal immediately."

Meanwhile, increased electronic surveillance on the subways is also pushing ahead, with little media coverage. Following the July 2005 London subway bombings, the Metropolitan Transportation Authority awarded a $212 million deal to top military contractor Lockheed Martin for a new electronic security system that will add over 1,000 cameras and 3,000 sensors to stations, trains and buses throughout the metro area.

BIRD FLU: HYPE, HYPOTHESIS, AND HYPODERMIC

A Scientific Analysis by A. Kronstadt

(We must always be aware that when professional purveyors of in-formation such as governments and corporations tell us something, it is for their own reasons. You are not going to get an objective assessment of the dangers of a little-known virus from bureaucrats, executives, or scientists who are heavily invested, financially as well as scientifically, in a hypothetical vaccine for that virus. They may or may not necessarily lie to us in every given instance, but they will certainly make maximum use of the situation. Research into bird flu, also known as avian influenza, is presently taking place, mainly on a speculative level.)



SCOTT CUNNINGHAM

Is 2006 the Next 1918?

In 1918, amidst the chaos of World War I, with its consequent population displacements and troop movements, a great influenza pandemic arose. The disease, which continued to spread through the beginning of 1920, was popularly called the Spanish Flu in the United States, due to the myth that it had spread from Spain. Scientists variously point to the trenches of France, India, China, and even the U.S. itself as the epicenter of the pandemic.

Without antibiotics, people succumbed to the bacterial pneumonia that attacked those whose lungs had been compromised by the influenza. The war also brought about a wave of malnutrition and hunger that worked hand in hand with the influenza virus to end the lives of some 20 million people. Based on the present world population, extrapolations are being made from these figures that put possible deaths in a pandemic of influenza caused by the avian flu in the hundreds of millions.

At present, the number of humans who have so far died from bird flu is only in the hundreds, and the people who have caught it have gotten it from birds, not from other humans. However, though this virus, which would have to transmit from human to human in an efficient manner, does not exist yet, Big Pharmaceuticals and government bureaucracy are latching onto the apocalyptic speculations of some scientists to panic society into putting vast resources into vaccines that may or may not protect against any possible eventual human version of the virus.

The Speculative Vaccine: Does Big Pharma Have the Answer?

The purpose of a vaccine is to cause the human immune system to develop antibodies to defend against a specific microbial invader. If the identity of the invader is vague, any vaccine against it will be of uncertain usefulness in protecting against it. For example, a reliable human vaccine against the feared avian influenza strain H5N1 cannot be developed until it fully transforms itself from a bird to a human virus itself, and there is no fully human version of the bird flu virus at this time. The avian influenza virus strain H5N1 is still a bird disease, spreading via infected birds, poultry products and contaminated items associated with the industry in and around factory-like establishments where birds are imprisoned in order to provide eggs and meat for human consumption. The scientific community in general admits that any vaccine against such a bird virus may or may not work against future versions of the virus that have mutated to specifically spread among humans.

In 1997, the first cases of bird-to-human transmission of H5N1 were observed in areas of Southeast Asia, where both factory-scale and small-scale farming of chickens and ducks are central to the economy. Since then, there have been more than 121 human cases, with an approximate 50% fatality rate. The patients were all people who had lived or worked in close proximity to poultry or poultry derivatives, and there is no evidence at this time that the virus has been transmitted from one human to another, like the common humanized strains of the flu that people catch all over the world.

H5N1 is transmitted to poultry workers and their family members, and to pigs, which are ubiquitous in the countryside of China, Vietnam, and Thailand where the disease has also spread to humans. In all of the above-mentioned species, we are told that the virus is mutating, and it is only a matter of time before the germ becomes fully adapted to the pigs and to the humans and acquires the ability to spread among members of both of these species, as well as among the birds. It is then that, so the authorities tell us, the disease will reach pandemic status and there will be mass fatalities, since we will have less innate immunity to a newly-mutated virus than we do to the regular strains to which we are exposed on a daily basis.

There is a Catch-22 here: it will only be after the disease starts spreading from human to human, probably in some urban context, that development of a truly reliable vaccine can even start, because only then will there be a specific virus against which to make the vaccine, just as there are vaccines against the common strains of flu that spread through big cities in the winter.

This has not prevented pharmaceutical companies from taking billions of dollars from the government to stockpile "pre-pandemic" vaccines against the virus strains that have affected the hundred or so humans that have so far caught the disease from birds, on the assumption that it will be these strains that will become pandemic.

Chiron Pharmaceuticals claims that its vaccine against the H5 part of the virus will be sufficient to immunize against any of the possible mutants that will start transmitting from human to human. On October 27, 2005, the Emeryville, California, pharmaceutical giant announced that it had obtained a $62.5 million contract from theDepartment of Health and Human Services (HHS) to supply the U.S. government with pre-pandemic bird flu vaccine. A month prior to Chiron's announcement, HHS announced that it had awarded a $100 million contract to Sanofi Pasteur, the U.S. offshoot of the French drug conglomerate of that same name, to sell HHS a pre-pandemic vaccine to protect against one of the virus strains currently passing from bird to human.

Chiron's record with regard to health and safety has been less than sterling. In August of 2004, contamination by a bacterium, Serratia marcescens, often associated with hospital-acquired infections in patients, delayed shipment of a conventional flu vaccine in the U.S. This resulted in the suspension of Chiron's license to produce the vaccine at its plant in Liverpool, U.K.

Scientists are by no means unanimous in assessing the value of these pre-pandemic vaccines. Particularly since early 2006, when the H5N1 strain was detected in migratory wild bird populations and lurking silently in apparently healthy birds, the focus has been on the opportunities that the virus has had to mutate. There are now four distinct varieties of H5N1, and, according to Dr. Malik Peris in a report published in the Proceedings of the National Academy of Science (2/7/06), emphasis has to be on broad cross-protection, rather than on a single vaccine.

Virus of Profiteering: Donald Rumsfeld and Tamiflu

The money allotted to Chiron and Sanofi Pasteur is only part of the $1.2 billion in discretionary funding that has been granted by Congress to President George W. Bush for the production of 20 million doses of pre-pandemic vaccine, which is only part of the $7.1 billion in avian flu emergency funds, all of which is to be spent at Bush's own discretion. That package also includes $2 billion to stockpile advanced antiviral drugs for the treatment of people already infected or exposed, the best known of which is Tamiflu, manufactured by the Swiss pharmaceutical corporation Roche. Tamiflu, whose generic name is oseltamavir, is a DNA-like compound that combines with and "clogs up" an enzyme essential to the reproduction of the flu virus and thereby stops the germ's transmission from cell to cell. Roche leases the patent for Tamiflu from Gilead Sciences, a Foster City California-based research and development firm specializing in "small-molecule therapeutics," including antivirals, such as Viread, used in AIDS therapy, and Hepsera, used in the treatment of hepatitis B, as well as Tamiflu. From 1997 until the beginning of 2001, when he was tapped by President George W. Bush for the job of Secretary of Defense, Donald H, Rumsfeld served as chairman of the board of Gilead Sciences.

Rummy, who has served in dozens of high corporate posts between government jobs, resigned his post at Gilead when he took the Bush cabinet position, and pledged to recuse himself from any government decisions involving his "former" company. However, Rumsfeld still holds somewhere between $5 million and $25 million in Gilead stock. Gilead is a low-profile company that does little manufacturing on its own. For example, it collects royalties from Roche for the rights to Tamiflu, but, technically speaking, is not the commercial supplier for the drug. When the Pentagon, under Rumsfeld's tutelage, purchased $58 million worth of the antiviral for use by military physicians, Rummy had plausible deniability in saying that he had recused himself from dealings directly involving Gilead as a party in the legal sense of the word. But in reality, his equity in the Gilead stock has been swelled by the royalties paid by Roche out of the money paid to them by the government. Gilead stock has increased in value by at least 500% since 2001, from $7 per share to $54 per share, and has undergone a surge from $35 to $54 a share over a few weeks at the height of the big bird flu panic.

In November of 2005, Gilead defeated Roche in a Federal lawsuit and won the right to terminate the latter company's license to Tamiflu. It will be interesting to note who the next licensee will be and how much of the Bush administration's discretionary funding they will end up with.

In May, 2004, in response to clinical findings that included the deaths of at least two patients, health officials in Japan ordered that neurological symptoms, including impaired consciousness, abnormal behaviors, and hallucinations, be added to the list of possible side effects associated with Tamiflu, a.k.a. oseltamivir. Japanese physicians reported an additional 64 cases of neurological complications from the drug

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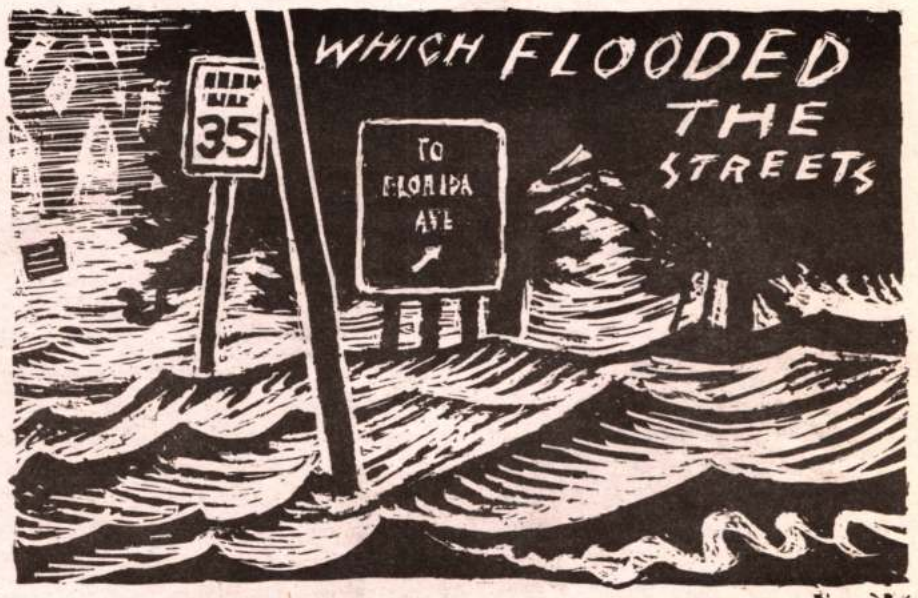


IN NEW ORLEANS' FLOOD BATTERED LOWER 9th WARD, THERE ARE MANY HOUSES IN FIXABLE CONDITION. THE LOWER 9th WARD HAS AN UNUSUALLY HIGH RATE OF BLACK HOME OWNERSHIP.

THE SKY ABOVE IS A-BUZZ WITH BUZZARDS,

DEVELOPERS HOVER IN HELICOPTERS,

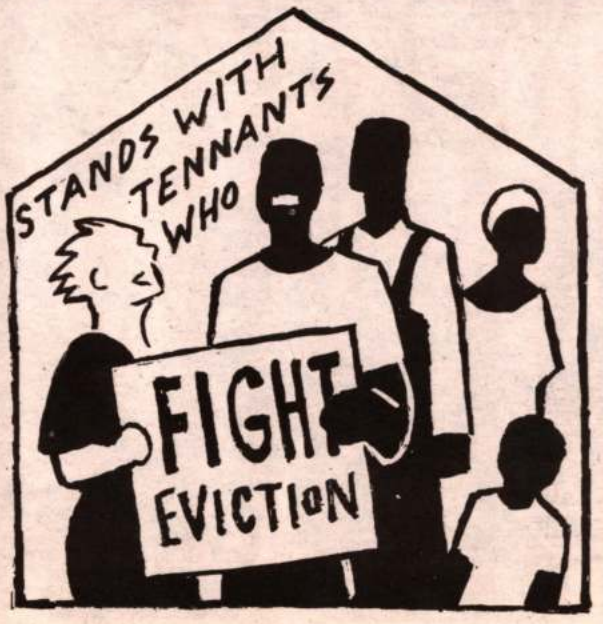
SPECULATORS CIRCLE LIKE VULTURES.

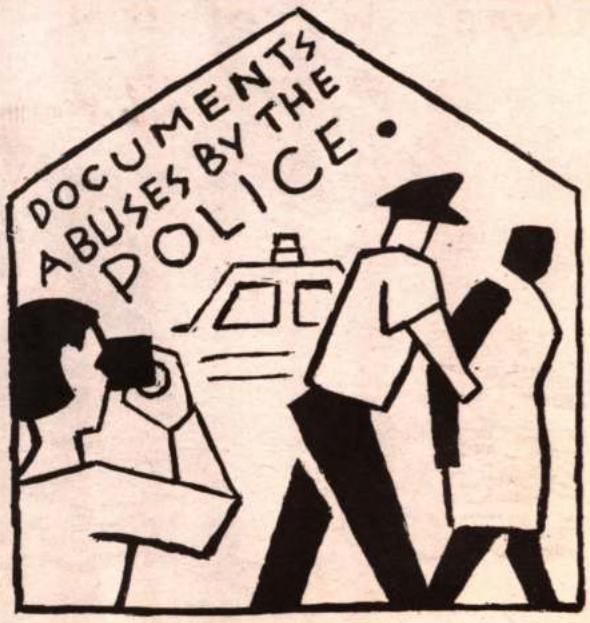
JANUARY '06, THE MAYOR PROPOSES DEMOLISHING THE LOWER 9th WARD

BATTLE OF THE LOWER 9th

AND THEN TURNING THE LAND OVER TO THESE GREEDY REAL-ESTATE VULTURES.

INTERNATIONAL VOLUNTEERS UNDER THE GUIDANCE OF LOCAL ACTIVISTS.





OWNERS OF THE BLUE HOUSE HAVE AGREED TO ALLOW COMMON GROUND To USE IT AS A BASE To DEFEND THE 9th WARD

VOLUNTEERS DON PROTECTIVE SUITS AND GET TO WORK.

SMASHING ROTTING PLASTER

HAULING AWAY RUBBLE

BLEACHING AWAY DEADLY MOLD

THE NATIONAL GUARD ROLLS UP. IT IS NOT EXACTLY LEGAL TO BE WORKING IN THE LOWER 9th WARD.

BUT THE GUARD DOES NOT STOP THE WORK CREW. RELATIONS BETWEEN GUARD & ACTIVISTS ARE SURPRISINGLY GOOD.

IN LESS THAN A WEEK THE BLUE HOUSE IS IN LIVABLE CONDITION.

ACTIVISTS WILL MOVE IN READY To RESIST BULLDOZERS IF THEY COME.

RESPECT THIS COMMUNITY!

LAND FOR WHO

Rebuild NOW

PEOPLE LIVE HERE

RESPECT THIS HOUSE

Steady on Gonna Good

WELCOME HOME

ACTIVISTS GO TO COURT TO PREVENT THE DEMOLITIONS.

STOP THESE VULTURES!

EVEN IF A HOUSE IS BADLY DAMAGED, IT'S WRONG TO DESTROY PEOPLES' PROPERTY WITHOUT NOTIFYING THEM FIRST.

THE JUDGE PROMISES THAT RUBBLE WILL BE CLEARED FROM STREETS, BUT NO HOUSES WILL BE DESTROYED.

HOUSES ARE BEING DESTROYED RIGHT NOW!

ACTIVISTS RUSH TO THE LOWER 9TH WARD WHERE A DEMOLITION IS IN PROGRESS.

ACTIVISTS JUMP BETWEEN THE WREAKING MACHINE AND PEOPLES' PRECIOUS POSSESSIONS.

THE DEMOLTION CREW GIVES UP IMMEDIATELY AND DRIVES AWAY.

THE NEXT DAY IN COURT, THE JUDGE ISSUES A 2 MONTH MORITORIUM ON DEMOLITIONS.

MARCH, THE MAYOR FLIP-FLOPS UNDER PRESSURE:

UNITED S D N.O.

BRING ALL OUR PEOPLE HOME

REBUILD WHERE YOU WANT, BUT REBUILD AT YOUR OWN RISK.

WHAT DOES THAT MEAN?

IT MEANS:

MONEY WILL BE SPENT ON FIXING OTHER AREAS, NOT THE LOWER 9TH WARD.

POWER AND WATER MAY OR MAY NOT BE RESTORED.

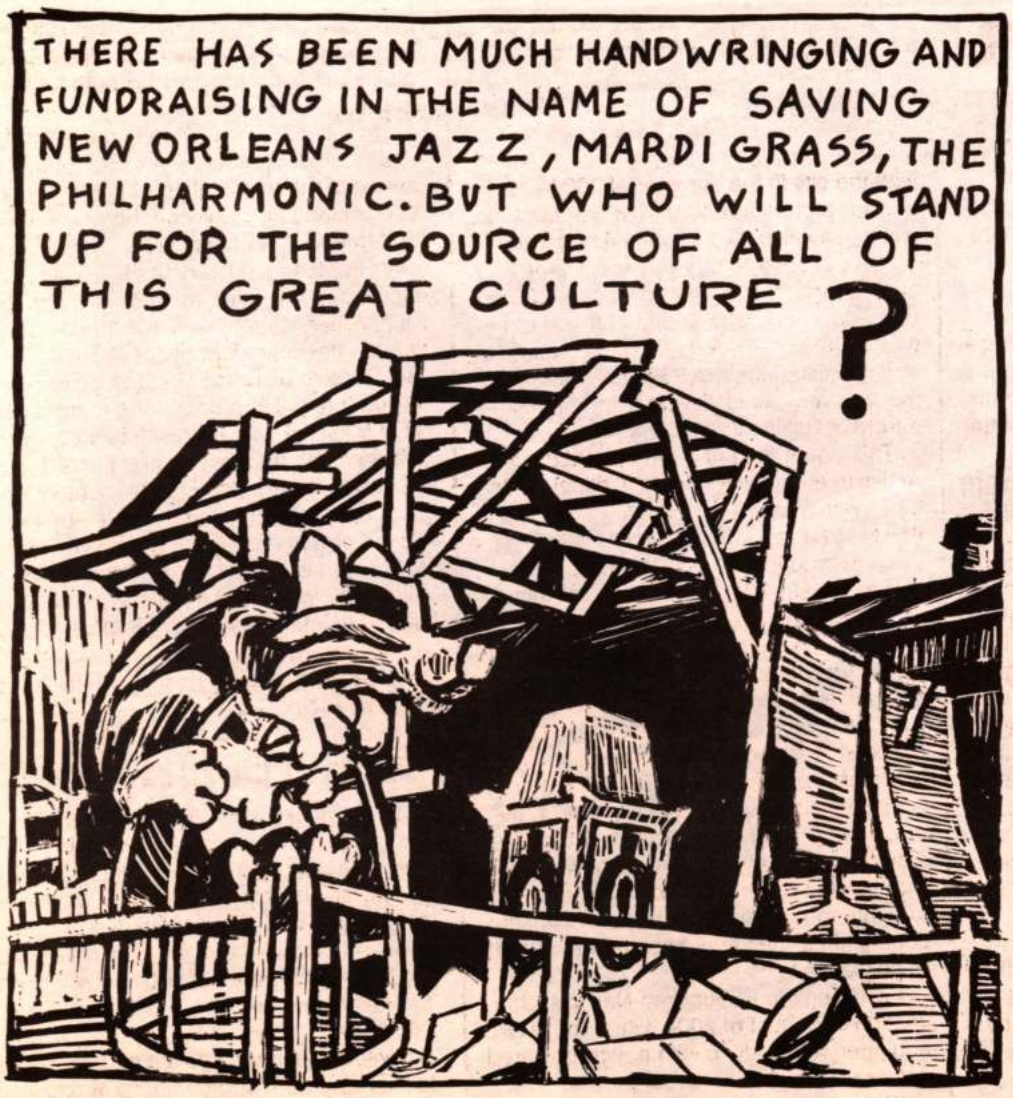
POLICE, FIRE, SANITATION, TRANSPORTATION, AND EDUCATION SERVICES MAY OR MAY NOT BE RESTORED.

HE'S MAYOR MAY OR MAY NOT.

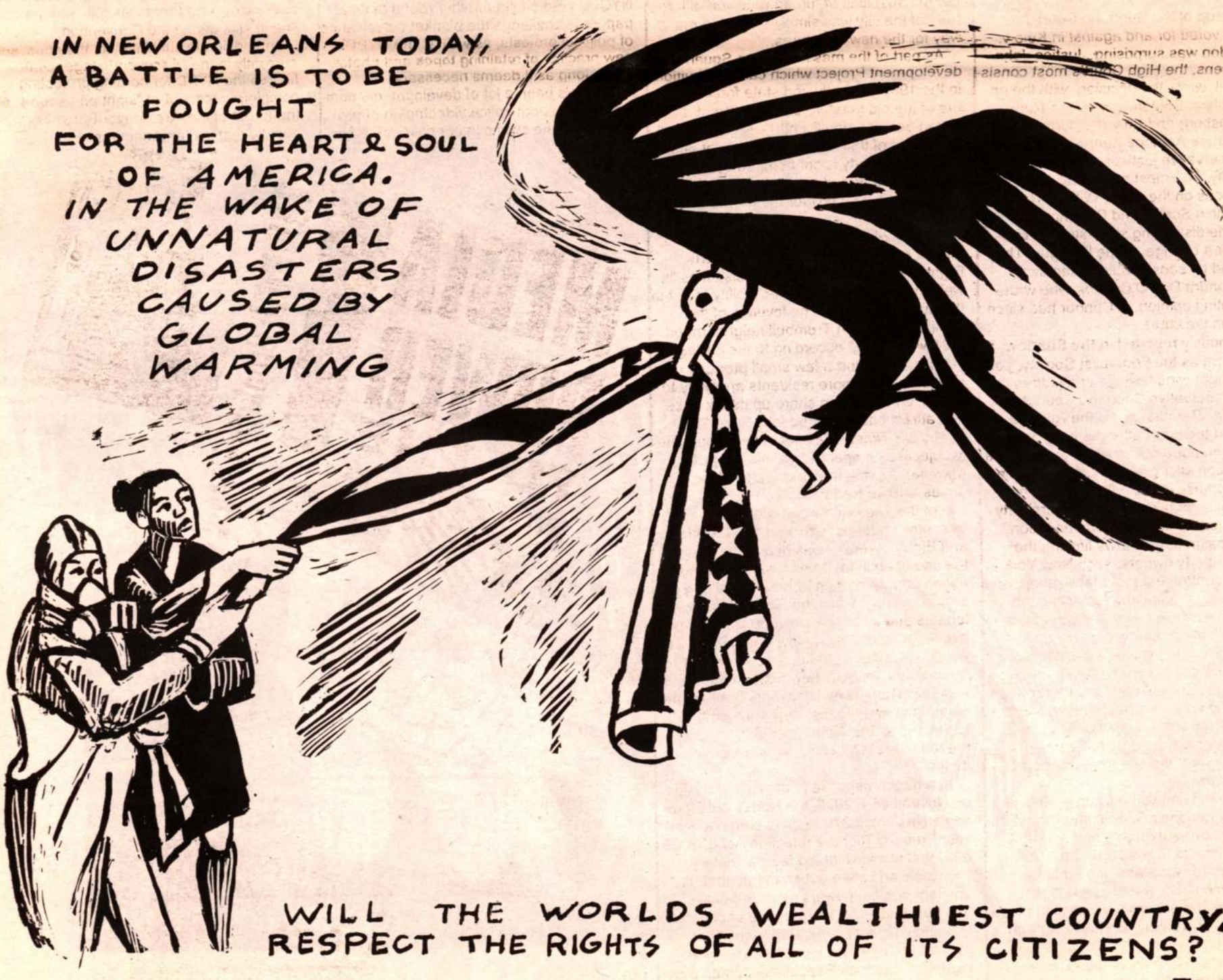
PEOPLE ARE OFFERED BUY-OUTS TO GIVE UP THEIR HOMES.

LEVEES MAY OR MAY NOT BE FIXED!

IN OTHER WORDS "RED-LINING" ON A POST APOCALYPTIC SCALE.


THERE HAS BEEN MUCH HANDWRINGING AND FUNDRAISING IN THE NAME OF SAVING NEW ORLEANS JAZZ, MARDI GRASS, THE PHILHARMONIC. BUT WHO WILL STAND UP FOR THE SOURCE OF ALL OF THIS GREAT CULTURE ?

IN NEW ORLEANS TODAY, A BATTLE IS TO BE FOUGHT FOR THE HEART & SOUL OF AMERICA. IN THE WAKE OF UNNATURAL DISASTERS CAUSED BY GLOBAL WARMING



WILL THE WORLDS WEALTHIEST COUNTRY, RESPECT THE RIGHTS OF ALL OF ITS CITIZENS?

SETH '06

DOWN BY LAW:

OMINOUS DOMAIN: DEATH BY GOVERNMENT OR DEATH BY PROPERTY

By A. Kronstadt

On June 23, 2005, the U.S. Supreme Court handed down a 5-4 decision affirming the right of the government of the City of New London, Connecticut, to raze an entire working class neighborhood of private homes in order to transfer the properties to private corporations as part of a waterfront development project. This decision was in response to a suit brought by the homeowners (Kelo v. City of New London, No. 04-108).

Although the plaintiffs did not challenge the city government's ability to take over property in the public interest, a power known as "eminent domain," they contended that "public use" as defined by the Fifth Amendment, refers to something like a school or a project directly dedicated to public service. The private sector development project in New London, which would include a marina, office buildings, upscale housing, and a $300 million research facility for pharmaceutical giant Pfizer, would be designed to generate tax revenue for the city. At a time when the inflated real estate market is threatening older, established communities with over-development and displacement, the Kelo decision leaves those at the lower end of the property food chain (tenants and homeowners), without legal recourse on the federal level against real estate developers and the politicians they carry in their pockets.

The lineup of the Supreme Court Justices who voted for and against in Kelo v. New London was surprising. Justice John *Paul Stevens, the High Court's most consis*tent liberal, wrote the decision, with the endorsements of Clinton appointees Ruth Bader Ginsburg and Steven J. Breyer. Reagan appointee Anthony Kennedy, one of the more conservative justices, also joined with the majority. The most obstinately right-wing Justices on the court, William Rehnquist, Antonin Scalia, and Clarence Thomas were on the dissenting side--strange bedfellows, for a change, of the little guy. They were joined by conservative Reagan appointee Sandra Day O'Connor, who wrote the dissenting opinion. O'Connor has since retired from the court.

As previously reported in **the Shadow**, a group known as the Federalist Society, consisting of right-wing lawyers and judges that include conservative Supreme Court Justices Scalia, Thomas, and John Roberts (who joined the court after the Kelo decision), has mapped out an effort to eliminate what they consider government regulation under the clause in the Fifth Amendment that prohibits the taking of private property for public use without just compensation. Their campaign targets laws limiting the rights of property owners, such New York City's rent control and rent stabilization, and environmental regulations restricting the dumping of waste in rivers and streams located on private property.

There appear to be two political factions on this issue: one is conservatives, such as the Federalist Society and the anti-rent-control nuts who want to give private property owners full power to trample on the populace, and the other is "eminent domain" liberals who want the government to have that same power.

Although the court's decision in Kelo vs. City of New London could be interpreted as a slap to the property-rights and anti-rent-control extremists, it is also a slap to pretty much everybody else who is neither part of the government, nor a real estate developer. It gives the government carte blanche to dismantle entire neighborhoods at will. "Under the banner of economic development," Justice O'Connor noted in her dissenting opinion, "all private property is now vulnerable to being taken and transferred to another private owner, so long as it might be upgraded—i.e., given to an owner who will use it in a way that the legislature deems more beneficial to the public."

Though the Kelo decision mainly prevents recourse on the federal level to those fighting condemnation and eminent domain and the taking of their property for private use, these cases can still be fought on the local, city and state levels.

Still, the sinister implications of Kelo are mitigated by the fact that it really doesn't change things all that much, at least not in New York City. Eminent domain has long been abused in order to destroy communities and enrich real estate plutocrats. It was eminent domain that allowed the LaGuardia administration to raze the entire Gaslight District, an area on the Lower East Side consisting of low rent tenement buildings, inexpensive hotels and bars, and turn the properties over to the Metropolitan Life Insurance Company, which erected the Stuyvesant Town apartment complex on the site. It was eminent domain that allowed unelected city "construction coordinator" and "master builder" Robert Moses to decimate neighborhoods throughout the city, condemning and demolishing housing for the construction of roadways, bridges, and tunnels charging tolls that were pocketed by Moses, and for Moses' pet projects such as the United Nations and Lincoln Center--under the auspices of "urban renewal," a large tract of the city was simply erased to make way for the new structures.

As part of the massive Times Square Redevelopment Project which came to fruition in the 1990s, the city and state forced owners of the old theaters on 42nd Street, between Seventh and Eighth Avenues, to sell. The result of that kind of eminent domain, in which property is condemned by the government and turned over to private parties, is to provide bargains for those who are already wealthy.

A June 24, 2005 editorial in the *NY Times*, entitled: "The Limits of Property Rights," referred to the Kelo decision as "a welcome vindication of cities' ability to act in the public interest." "The leveling of the working class Fort Trumbull neighborhood of New London," according to the *Times* pundits, "may hurt a few small property owners, {but] many more residents are likely to benefit if the city can shore up its tax base and attract badly needed jobs."

The *NY Times* does not have a completely objective perspective on this subject, however. As with the other parts of the Times Square Redevelopment area, the site of the *Times'* new block-long headquarters, now under construction at 40th Street and Eighth Avenue, was acquired through the use of eminent domain and the condemnation and demolition of buildings along Eighth Avenue, which housed long-term tenants and small businesses. The *Times* has announced that no low-end businesses will be permitted in the ground floor commercial spaces of its new state of the art building. There is no indication that this real estate giveaway to the *Times* is beneficial to the public–the *Times* happens to be at the top of the food chain, so the big meal is theirs.

In a direct response to the Kelo decision, on November 4, 2005, the House of Representatives voted 376 to 38 to pass the Private Property Rights Protection Act of 2005, a bill that would withhold federal money from local and state governments that use eminent domain powers to seize homes and businesses for the purpose of private economic development. Although it was pushed through the House by right-wing legislators such as Republican James Sensenbrenner of Ohio, this may be one of those rare cases where the right wing is, perhaps accidentally, on the right side.

COPS SUE COPS FOR... SPYING ON COPS!

By Sarah Ferguson

The irony couldn't be more clear. New York City police and their union, the Patrolmen's Benevolent Association, are suing the New York Police Department (NYPD) for spying on them at rallies and demonstrations held during their contract dispute with the city in the summer of 2004.

As reported on February 3, the lawsuit, which was also filed on behalf of the firefighters union and other police unions, charges that the NYPD's own surveillance of off-duty cops who attended these rallies was so heavy-handed and "intimidating" that it violated their civil rights. The cops' lawyer even called videotaping of the cops a form of "political harassment."

Talk about the pot calling the kettle black. Activists at anti-war demos, Critical Mass bike rides and other protestors have found themselves regularly under the heavy gaze of camera-toting Technical Assistance Response Unit (TARU) officers seemingly recording their every move.

"For years we have complained about the NYPD videotaping protesters," says Chris Dunn of the New York Civil Liberties Union (NYCLU), which has been fighting to curb police surveillance of activists since filing its landmark Handschu case in 1971 [after which the NYPD agreed to not videotape and photograph demonstrators–Ed.] "It's nice to see that police officers now agree with us. It sure is ironic, however, how cops turn into the biggest advocates of constitutional rights when they become the targets of police misconduct."

Following the Republican National Convention in August of 2004, when the NYPD equipped a Fuji blimp with a high-powered camera to hone in on street protests, the NYCLU fired off yet another round of legal papers to challenge the blanket surveillance of political protests, as well as the NYPD's new practice of retaining tapes and photos for as long as it deems necessary.

"There's been a lot of developments coming to light about police videotaping of protesters, so the claims in our case are dovetailing with the First Amendment claims brought by the Civil Liberties Union," explains the cops' lawyer Elizabeth McNammara.

So will the cops' suit help the NYCLU's case? "Anything that makes the public more aware of the intimidating effect of police surveillance helps. When the police say it, that helps," says Dunn.

Activists found news of the cops' suit a bit galling, but were nevertheless pleased. "It just shows that this is too much already, if even the police are upset about it," says Bill DiPaolo of Times Up!, the ecology group that helps promote the monthly Critical Mass bike rides, which have been subject to much undercover cop surveillance.

Lately, Times Up! volunteers have taken to filming the cops that come to spy on bikers during the mass rides. "We videotape them videotaping us. Since we've started doing it, we've noticed a significant decrease in the number of [police] who show up to videotape. But that may be because it's become an issue in the press," says DiPaolo.

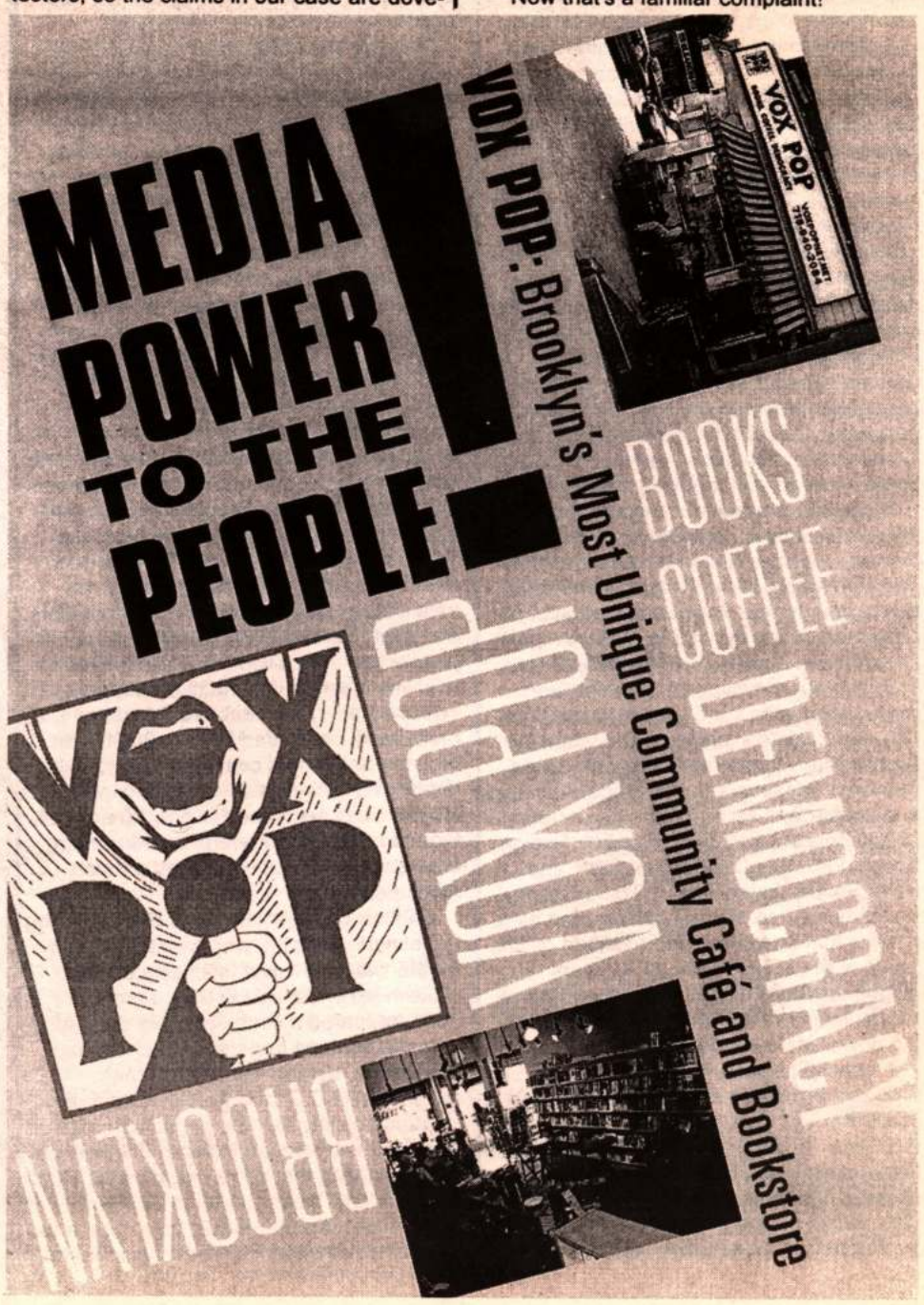
Perhaps the cops suing the cops should trying videotaping those cops too.

* * * * * * * * *

Some background: While police, FBI, and military surveillance of activists has been a hot topic in the news lately, this police lawsuit is actually old news. It was originally filed back in August 2004, in response to the city's efforts to rein in protesting cops, who were staging rowdy pickets and rallies over pay hikes and benefits in the weeks leading up to the Republican Convention. Off-duty police had even taken to "stalking" Mayor Bloomberg at public appearances, and there was talk of cops calling in sick during the Convention.

In addition to surveillance, the cops' suit, currently in the "discovery" stage, challenges the NYPD for herding protesting cops into pens, out of "sight and sound" of the target of their ire: Mayor Bloomberg.

Now that's a familiar complaint!



BOOK REVIEW:

THE BIG WEDDING:
9-11, The Whistle-Blowers & The Cover-Up

Review By A. Kronstadt

In the months after the horrific events of September 11, 2001, American society experienced an eclipse of reason, during which George W. Bush was given a blank check to transform government in his own image. Abominations like the USA PATRIOT Act sailed through Congress with barely a whimper of opposition. It became positively unpatriotic to question whether putting the entire emergency management system under the hegemony of the Department of Homeland Security bureaucracy was really a good idea. It was not until the governmental fiasco in the wake of Hurricane Katrina that this question was finally answered. Only now are people beginning to realize that in the days and even hours after the World Trade Center was destroyed, certain completely unproven notions were imprinted upon our minds. (I use the word "imprinted" in the same sense that scientists use it in describing how experiences of baby animals determine their behavior for life.) For a little while there, the horror of September 11 and the deliberately manipulated imagery, reduced the American populace to the status of infants--unable to comprehend, picking up the concepts, the language itself, from the grown-ups, those in power.

One hope for getting Americans out of their post 9-11 trance is that a large number of independently produced and published documentaries and books are being generated by independent investigators and researchers that reveal more truth behind the events of September 11, 2001. One such book is **"The Big Wedding: 9-11, The Whistle Blowers, and The Cover-Up"** *(VoxPop #2, 2005)*, authored by Brooklyn-based investigative journalist Sander Hicks. The title of this engrossing work is based on a codeword alleged to have been used by some of the 9-11 terrorists referring to the attacks, but which could also be interpreted as referring to the conjugal bliss that the U.S. government has enjoyed with Islamic fundamentalism.

In **The Big Wedding**, Hicks develops a thesis, based on interviews with ex-intelligence operatives, many of whom have been involved with or have been in close proximity to "black ops," i.e., covert criminal operations carried out by government agents. Hicks' informants in **The Big Wedding** are a rogue's gallery that includes a diamond smuggler, pedophile, and Egyptian double agent. These unsavory characters provide Hicks with information that he weaves into a story where there are no boundaries between the Pakistani intelligence service (ISI), U.S. intelligence, and Islamic fundamentalists--perhaps including those involved with the 9-11 attacks.

Hicks bases many of his contentions on information that is common knowledge. The marriage between these forces was brokered by members of the Reagan administration to counter the Soviet occupation of Afghanistan during the 1980s. Pakistan had always been a good Cold War ally of the U.S. and our enemies, the Soviets, were close to Pakistan's arch enemy India. The CIA and Pakistani intelligence backed the Afghan Mujahideen rebels (Islamic fundamentalist precursors to the Taliban) against a succession of secular, pro-Soviet regimes in Afghanistan, and were joined by foreign forces, including Osama bin-Laden and other Saudis. In the '90s, Pakistani intelligence helped create and later served as a partner to the ultra-orthodox Taliban militia, again at the behest of the U.S. Years of infighting after the Soviet withdrawal from Afghanistan in 1989 led to the Taliban taking power there in 1994.

Financial backing for the Mujahideen was funneled in through front companies of the Bank of Credit and Commerce International (BCCI), a Pakistan-based institution originally touted as a source of capital for poorer nations, but which evolved into a kind of state within a state in Pakistan, heavily overlapping in high ranking personnel with the ISI. BCCI was linked with the Bush and bin Laden families in Michael Moore's film **Fahrenheit 9-11**, which showed that Bush crony James Bath acted as an intermediary for money transfers between Saudi moguls, including Salem bin-Laden, and some Bush enterprises, via BCCI majority shareholder Sheik Khalid bin Mafouz. But Hicks points out that BCCI was also an instrument used by U.S. and Pakistani intelligence agents to hook up deals with arms merchants and to supply the Afghan Mujahideen with weapons to fight the Soviets.

Although BCCI collapsed in the early 1990s, the basic infrastructure of money laundering and arms dealing created by the U.S. and Pakistan to aid the Islamic fundamentalist cause in Afghanistan has continued to exist, and Hicks contends that it was this infrastructure that financed the 9-11 attacks. As evidence for this, Hicks points to a key event on October 9, 2001, ignored by the U.S. media, that was reported by the *Times of India* and *Agence Presse France* [See http://billstclair.com/911timeline/2001/afp101001.html -- Ed.], whereby a middleman, acting on behalf of Pakistani intelligence chief General Mahmood Ahmad, wired $100,000 to purported 9-11 hijack ringleader Mohammed Atta the day before the September 11 attacks. Ahmad was subsequently dismissed from his post as the head of the ISI in October, 2001, due to his alleged ties to the Taliban and Pakistani Islamist groups.

Ahmad's dismissal came at a time when Pakistani President Pervaz Musharraf had publicly renounced his government's past links to the Taliban and pledged Pakistan's support for Bush's War on Terrorism. One could speculate whether or not the *Times of India* report on the ISI chief's role in 9-11 was a piece of Indian propaganda, but the links between U.S. intelligence, the ISI, and Islamists in Pakistan and Afghanistan are incontrovertible common knowledge.

The Big Wedding includes an interview with sleazy diamond merchant turned FBI informant Randy Glass, who says that, in June of 1999, he participated in a sting operation that involved meeting Pakistani arms dealer R.G. Abbas at the Tribeca Grill, a pricey New York restaurant owned by actor Robert De Niro, located a few blocks from the World Trade Center. According to Glass, also at this meeting was Diaa Mohsen, an Egyptian arms dealer who had introduced Glass to a number of key terror figures whom Mohsen knew on a business level. Subjects that Glass says were discussed at the Tribeca meeting included sales of anti-aircraft missiles and heavy water, which Pakistani nuclear weapons researchers wanted in order to manufacture plutonium. At a certain point in the conversation, Glass says, Abbas pointed to the Twin Towers and told him: "Those towers are coming down." Glass states that he tried desperately to inform his FBI handlers and later, Senator Bob Graham, about the plot he had gotten wind of, but the information was ignored, if not actively suppressed. The sting operation, dubbed Operation Diamondback, concluded in June 2001, with Mohsen and others convicted for money laundering and violation of arms export laws. Mohsen was sentenced to only 30 months, though he violated Federal anti-terrorism laws and should have received a much stiffer penalty.

Another protagonist in **The Big Wedding** is Delmart Vreeland, who worked as a spy for the Office of Naval Intelligence and, while in jail in Canada in the summer of 2001, prepared a series of notes describing potential terrorist targets of which he had knowledge, demanding to have them passed on to U.S. and Canadian authorities. Vreeland claims to have run across a document passing through Russian intelligence circles, stating that there would be an attack on the World Trade Center in September of 2001. Hicks includes evidence to vouch for Vreeland's intelligence credentials, but unfortunately, Vreeland comes across as being crazy. Hicks does not deny that many of his sources are nuts and outlaws, but, he says, they are the most suitable types for "black ops," where they were able to pick up information on the most nefarious acts of the U.S. government. Hicks told **the SHADOW**: "Intelligence agents can outcriminalize criminals. There are no archbishops in espionage. You don't have to like these people, you just have to find corroboration."

One of Hicks' intellectual precursors in contending that double agents working for the both U.S. government and Islamic fundamentalist forces were at the bottom of the September 11 attacks is Daniel Hopsicker, author of **Welcome to Terrorland: Mohammed Atta and the 9/11 Coverup in Florida** In **The Big Wedding**, Hicks focuses closely on Hopsicker's research regarding Huffman Aviation and its training school in Venice, Florida. Three of the four supposed 9-11 hijackers learned to fly at Venice Municipal Airport, where Huffman is based, and a fourth trained at the neighboring Florida Flight Training Center. In **Welcome to Terrorland**, Hopsicker outlines the role of Huffman's owner Wally Hilliard in making the aviation company's Venice airfields available for government-sponsored drug dealing, which allowed the Mujahedeen to remain self-sufficient.

Hopsicker paints a picture of Mohammed Atta, while he was at Huffman in Venice and in the nearby Florida Keys, that differs from the image of the devoted true believer who appears in the 9-11 Commission report Hopsicker reveals Atta as a cynical carouser who loved alcohol and parties, and who seems to fit the profile shared by a number of Egyptian double agents that have simultaneously served the interests of Western intelligence and Islamic fundamentalism. Hicks compares Hopsicker's Atta with Emad Salem, an Egyptian double agent who acted as a government informant and instigator in connection with the World Trade Center bombing of 1993 **(See SHADOW #34: "FBI Bombed World Trade Center," by Paul Di Rienzo, which Hicks uses as a source -- Ed).**

In **The Big Wedding**, Hicks lambastes the 9-11 Commission, which he describes as a group of ten Washington insiders, and its report, which he accuses of ignoring anomalies, such as the fact that the 9-11 attacks took place on a day when three large-scale air-defense drills were in progress, immobilizing any Air Force resources that might have responded effectively to the incidents. The indisputable fact that this "stand-down" was in progress on 9-11 has become a key piece of evidence for 9-11 skeptics, whether they be of the "they *let* it happen" or the "they *made* it happen" school of thought.

In addition to his journalism and publishing, Sander Hicks is among the pioneers of a nascent 9-11 Truth Movement. Although this effort includes independent thinkers of the left, right, and center, its members share a common distrust of the official conspiracy theory, whereby "the enemy" attacked America just because they hate our freedom.

One of Hicks' fellow 9-11 Truth Movement organizers is Nicholas Levis, whose detailed research can be found at: <http://summeroftruth.org>. Levis told **the SHADOW**: "I have come to the conclusion that this was an orchestrated event, that there was facilitation within the U.S. government, even though they may have used found elements, namely the Islamic fundamentalists, don't buy incompetence when it is this persistent. Bush, Rumsfeld, [acting Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff] General Myers and General Winfield [of the National Military Command Center] all found reasons not to be active on this day. Then there was Admiral Mies [of the Joint Chiefs of Staff], who was running the overall set of air defense war games under the umbrella of Global Guardian. Some of these exercises, like Vigilant Guardian and Vigilant Warrior, appear to have used the scenario of multiple domestic hijackings and crash bomb-

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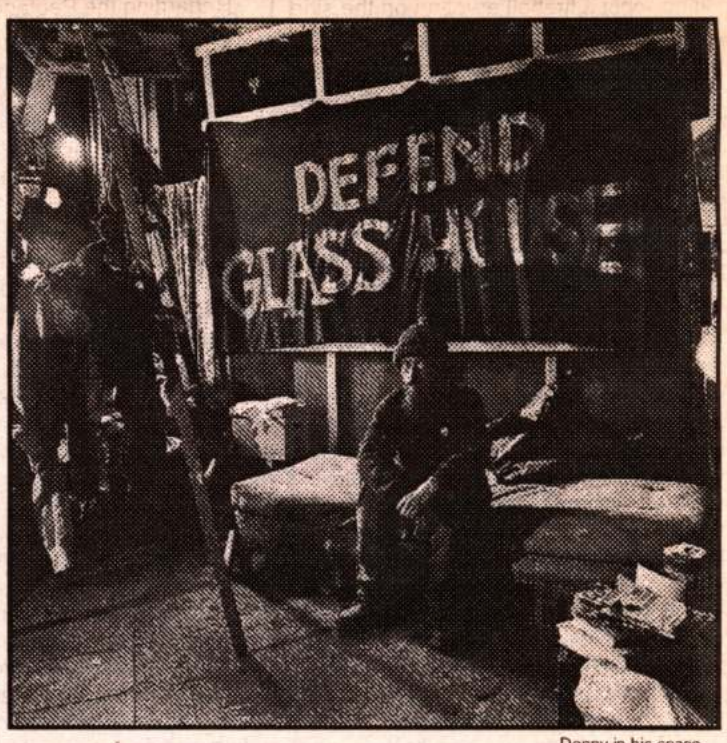

Donny in his space.

GLASS HOUSE
Margaret Morton

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VIDEO REVIEWS:

9-11: IN PLANE SITE + LOOSE CHANGE

Reviewed By Chris Flash

Thanks to efforts by the alternative media and independent investigators, we are finding out more about events before, during and after the attacks of September 11, 2001. Circumventing the mainstream media's black-out and backing of the official story (the real "conspiracy theory") about the events of September 11, symposiums and conferences are being regularly held around the country, as independent documentaries and films are being produced.

Two of the best documentaries we have seen recently are **911: In Plane Site**, (produced by The Power Hour) and **Loose Change** (written and directed by Dylan Avery.) Neither attempts to sway viewers. Both just present the facts that we have been deprived of since September 11, 2001 and encourage viewers to "draw your own conclusions" (**In Plane Site**) and to "ask questions and demand answers" (**Loose Change**).

911: In Plane Site first addresses the alleged crash of Flight #77 into the side of the Pentagon. An eye witness describes what hit the Pentagon as "a cruise missile with wings." Using a web site called "Hunt The Boeing," along with media footage and photos from magazines and newspapers, **IPS** shows that the hole in the side of the Pentagon is smaller than the size of the plane. There is also no damage to the outer wall of the Pentagon that would be consistent with an airliner crashing into it, and mainstream media footage clearly shows that the roof line is intact as the fire burns (a section of the roof is shown collapsing on live television hours **after** the alleged crash). There is not a trace of any wreckage, luggage or bodies of passengers from Flight #77 anywhere at the site of the "crash." Five blurry video frames subsequently released by the Pentagon show no plane hitting the building--only a fireball erupting on the side of the building. Oddly, the date printed on these frames is September 12, 2001!!

Next, we are presented with the planes crashing into the WTC. Fox tv reporter Mark Birnbach on live television describes the plane hitting the second tower "with no windows with a blue logo on front." Birnbach says "it was definitely not a commercial plane." Other live broadcasts show interview witnesses, reporters and police, all of whom describe hearing "explosions" before and as the towers collapse. Harlem firefighters interviewed after the collapses describe hearing explosions inside the first building to collapse as they were attempting rescues inside the second tower. These firefighters described controlled demolitions, resulting in a pancake-like demolition.

Real estate developer Larry Silverstein, lease holder of the WTC complex and owner of 7 WTC, is shown on the PBS documentary "America Rebuilds" explaining the collapse of 7 WTC: "I remember getting a call from the fire department commander telling me that they were not sure they were gonna be able to contain the fire and I said 'you know, we've had such a terrible loss of life, maybe the smartest thing to do is **pull it.**' And they made that decision to pull, and then we watched the building collapse." **IPS** points out that as it takes weeks for planning and placing synchronized detonation charges for controlled demolitions, this indicates **prior knowledge** of the events.

IPS, using footage obtained from "www.LetsRoll911.com," as well as from a CNN documentary "America Remembers" and footage captured by witnesses to the WTC crashes, shows a pod under the second plane hitting the second tower (2 WTC), as well as mysterious flashes as the plane comes into contact with the tower.

Ultra slow motion of the first plane hitting 1 WTC, obtained from the documentary shot by the Naudet brothers on September 11 reveals the same strange flash at the entry point, just before the plane hits. **IPS**, noting that the documentary footage of the first hit was not seen until **the day after** September 11, wonders about Bush's comment at a Town Hall session in Orlando, Florida, weeks later. When asked what went through his head when he heard about the first plane hitting the first [WTC] tower, Bush said: "...when we walked in the classroom, I had seen this plane fly into the first building--there was a tv set on and I thought it was pilot error."

The "Director's Cut" version of **IPS** addresses Flight #93 in Shanks-ville, PA, which was reported to have crashed at 10:00am. Yet, at 11:34am on September 11, ABC-TV affiliate WCPO in Cincinatti, Ohio, posted a story on its web page titled: "Plane Lands in Cleveland; Bomb Feared On Board," reporting that Cincinatti Mayor R. White said that a Boeing 757 out of Boston identified by United Airlines as Flight #93 "made an emergency landing at Cleveland Hopkins International Airport due to concerns that it may have a bomb onboard." According to the story, White said that the plane was "moved to a secure area of the airport and evacuated." The question is: Which was the real Flight #93 and which one crashed in Shanksville?

As an "extra" feature, **IPS** presents local media coverage from several television stations in Oklahoma City in the immediate aftermath of the bombing at the Alfred P. Murrah Building on April 19,1995. All describe at least **three** unexploded bombs being recovered and dismantled by police bomb squads–these bombs were said to be larger and more powerful than the one that had already exploded, thereby contradicting the lie that Timothy McVie did it with a bomb inside a rented truck. None of these reports were broadcast outside of Oklahoma City, nor were they aired by those television stations again.

Loose Change is a slicker production, moving at a faster pace, amplifying and building on information provided in **IPS** and adding much more.

Regarding the Pentagon crash, a quote from an October 12, 2001 Parade Magazine interview with Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld, is shown, in which he says: "Here we're talking about plastic knives, and using an American Airlines flight filled with our citizens, and **the missile to damage this building**, and similar (inaudible) that damaged the World Trade Center..."

The Pentagon is shown after the "crash" with no skid marks on the lawn; damage to Pentagon wall is inconsistent with being hit by a 757–footage of a plane slamming into a concrete bunker is shown to demonstrate this. A CNN reporter says there is no sign of a plane hitting the Pentagon; Pentagon employees are shown removing a large unidentified box wrapped in a blue tarp from the crash site; the holes in the WTC towers caused by 757s are shown as inconsistent with the hole at the Pentagon; cruise missile damage to Slobodan Milosevich residence in Belgrade is compared to the Pentagon damage–they are almost identical; surveillance cameras at a Sheraton hotel across the street from the Pentagon that would have shown what hit the building were confiscated by the FBI; satellite photos taken on September 7, 2001, show a white marking on the Pentagon lawn matching almost the exact trajectory of the hit on the Pentagon four days later.

At the World Trade Center: A worker on the 47th floor of 1 WTC reports: "There were explosions going off everywhere." Footage of the collapse is shown; fires in other steel buildings raging for longer periods consuming more floors than the WTC fires are shown, with no resulting collapse; eyewitnesses report huge explosions at the base of the towers. Including the elevators; before the collapses of the towers; news commentators describe controlled demolitions; windows and marble wall panels are seen blown off walls in the lobby of 1 WTC's lobby; WTC workers tell of basement Level C being blown out after the first plane hit; interviews with firemen describe controlled demolitions and explosions throughout buildings; radio transmission by a firefighter inside a WTC tower describes explosions (is this the real reason these recordings were suppressed after 9/11?); NBC reporter Pat Dawson says that FDNY chief of safety reports explosions in the WTC buildings–on camera, she says that "explosions continue to be heard"; slow motion footage of the WTC towers as they are in the process of collapsing shows explosive charges bursting out from the front and sides of the buildings 20-30 floors below the cascading rubble; a camera on a tripod filming 2 WTC shakes from a tremor 9 seconds before the first collapse; footage of the second hit at 2 WTC shows an explosion in the other side of the building as the plane hits.

The question of how explosives were placed beforehand is addressed: A WTC financial worker told People Magazine that in the weeks before 9/11, numerous unannounced and unusual drills took place in which sections of #1, #2 and #7 WTC were evacuated for "security reasons. Another WTC worker reported a "power down" on September 8 + 9 in 2 WTC, from the 48th floor and above, that took out security cameras and ID systems, as people came and went freely inside the WTC; a security guard at 1 WTC reported that after September 6, bomb sniffing dogs were removed from the WTC; President Bush's brother Marvin was a principal of Securicom, security provider for United Airlines, Dulles Airport, and for the WTC from the early 1990s through September 11, 2001; after the collapses, Mayor Giuliani ordered that the WTC steel be immediately shipped overseas to be melted down as scrap metal, preventing examination of forensic evidence that could have revealed evidence of explosives.

As for the crash of Flight #93 in Pennsylvania: Shanksville Mayor Ernie Stuhl tells of two witnesses who heard a missile hit Flight #93 over Pennsylvania; an emergency operator received a phone call from a passenger locked in a bathroom onboard Flight #93 who described feeling an explosion just before the line went dead; a 3 mile wide debris field is shown on television–no trace of a plane, nor bodies; no fire, just a crater.

Detailed descriptions of black boxes, which would have revealed what happened aboard the planes and if the planes were switched, are given. Despite their relative indestructability, the FBI made contradictory claims that some or all of the black boxes were destroyed.

Cell phones said to be made by passengers aboard the planes are examined: excerpts from the calls show oddities such as the unlikihood of successful connections at the altitude at which the "hijacked" planes flew and strange things the callers said to their loved ones.

As for the alleged hijackers: **Loose Change** says that 9 of the 19 alleged hijackers are still alive--several are described as Saudi airline pilots and workers.

The Bin Laden "confession" video tape is shown to be of poor quality, the man in the tape does not look like Bin Laden, and he wears a gold ring forbidden by Islamic law. Also, Bin Laden is left-handed while the man in the video tape writes with his right hand.

You don't need to be an expert on anything, nor do you have to believe what anyone says about what really transpired on September 11, 2001--just use your common sense, coupled with an historic perspective and ask yourself a few logical questions: Has anything like this happened before? Who benefits from the events of September 11, 2001? Who has the means to cover it up?

If the government's official line of bullshit and their mainstream media's black-out of any meaningful investigation into what happened on 9/11 seems fishy to you, we at the SHADOW urge you to investigate further on your own, ask questions and demand more from the media and elected officials. Better yet, circumvent the mainstream media and participate in the alternative media to find and share the truth. You can also organize and attend community gatherings (like those held at the Saint Mark's Church in New York City every Sunday night at 7pm)

In the absence of any checks and balances in a government that is out of control, the only recourse is an informed and politically-active populace that refuses to go along with the big lie.

BOOK REVIEW Continued...

ings, and this on the day when it actually happened. The evidence indicates that all of this was deliberately intended to confuse a response. The inaction by the head men in the military chain of command indicates intent." Levis added: "When the old Iran Contra crew is back in power after a stolen election, what do you expect? They committed all of these kinds of crimes already in the '80s, but they needed an enabling event before Americans would support multiple invasions and the transformations we've seen since September 11."

On the subject of motive, Sander Hicks told **the SHADOW**: "If you want to know why, look at the statements published by the Project for the New American Century [PNAC] in 2000." PNAC is a neoconservative Washington think tank founded in 1997 by William Kristol, which includes as members Richard Armitage, Jeb Bush, Dick Cheney, Lewis Libby, Richard Perle, Donald Rumsfeld, and Paul Wolfowitz. In 2000, PNAC issued a position paper titled "Rebuilding America's Defenses: Strategy, Forces and Resources for a New Century," that contained the following ominous line, referring to the difficulty of implementing their right wing agenda: "...the process of transformation, even if it brings revolutionary change, is likely to be a long one, absent some catastrophic and catalyzing event, like ***a new Pearl Harbor*** [emphasis supplied–Ed.]." This phrase has been interpreted as a pre-figuration of the events of 9-11. [**SHADOW** readers are encouraged to examine the PNAC statement at: <http://newamericancentury.org/RebuildingAmericasDefenses.pdf> and judge for themselves. One of the major goals expressed there is the overthrow of Saddam Hussein and the assertion of American power in the middle of the Islamic world–Ed.]

Two things are certain. One, that "a new Pearl Harbor" did indeed happen on September 11, 2001. Two, that Bush used the horrific events of that day to justify and blunt opposition to the subsequent U.S. invasions and occupations of Afghanistan and Iraq. More and more people in America are coming to the conclusion that the events of September 11 were engineered and cannot be a coincidence. The 9-11 Truth Movement is united by evidence that some in government had the intention and ability to arrange an incident that would turn the public's head just long enough to let them achieve their stated and published goals.

Those of us who have seen the first threads of the "big lie" come loose have a responsibility to unravel the remainder of this fabric of deceit and to convince people to take political action.

[Sander Hicks is now running for governor of New York: As he told **the SHADOW**: "Most New York State folks are progressive, and neither party represents that. Most New Yorkers are pro-peace and anti-death penalty, but [NYS Attorney General and gubernatorial candidate Elliot] Spitzer was rabidly pro-Iraq invasion, and he's pro-death penalty. He ignored a 2004 poll that showed 66% of the state wanted him to investigate all the anomalies around 9-11. Not listening to a majority is grounds for immediate termination of his public office. Spitzer has got to go."]

For more information, check out these web sites:

- <http://www.911Truth.org>
- <http://www.summeroftruth.org>
- <http://www.sanderhicks.com>
- <http://www.letsroll911.org>
- <http://www.total911.info>

SHEER LUNACY

Tune into to **www.msdivine.net** to view truly bizarre adventures that will leave your head spinning back to front, and craving to see more.....

NEW ORLEANS Continued....

Common Ground Headquarters

popular means of transportation for folks at the Common Ground.

There were anarchists mingling with soccer moms, who were shooting the breeze with trans-genders mixing it up with Baptist preachers, along with college kids earning class credits, dropouts searching for somewhere to drop in, doctors, lawyers, and even a couple of young republicans.

The morning meetings were conducted in a non-authoritarian fashion, with no hierarchy, no time clocks and with collective participation. It was a perfect way to start a workday.

The meetings gave me a glimpse into the enormity of the tasks performed by the Collective. In addition to house gutting, mold abatement and roof taping; the group also provided free legal support, medical care, documentary work, distribution of clothing, clean water, food, and other necessities, as well as organic gardening and other sustainable development projects. Along with child care, after school tutoring and day to day political struggles, everyone's skills had a place within the collective. If a volunteer had an idea for a new project, they could bring it to the attention of the collective and they would usually find a few volunteers interested in working alongside them.

After about a half hour of addressing individual concerns, the facilitator would step back as a volunteer with a clipboard entered the circle. Time for work assignments--one by one, jobs were read from a list, along with the number of volunteers needed for each job. A crew leader was picked for each project, and interested people reported to that person. Then it was off to work for the day. But first, a group called Sun Salutation offered yoga sessions to level body, mind and spirit. Good for everyone, but particularly beneficial to the house gutting crews, who would spend days inside abandoned houses, sweating in TyVec suits and breathing through respirators.

In time, I'd get my share of that, but this morning, I was on my way to install a kitchen sink in a women's center scheduled to open by the end of the week. I estimated that the job would take me two days. The first day would be spent taking measurements and finding a truck to drive me to a store for supplies. Without knowing, I had made my first mistake. Assuming I would operate here in the same way that I would outside of a disaster zone was wrong. Materials would come for this job, but not in the same manner I had been accustomed to.

The Common Ground Women's Center was located on the corner of Robertson and Louisa in the Ninth Ward. I walked into the gutted building with my tools, where I met a kid named Josh who was working on some plumbing in the bathroom. He showed me where the kitchen was. Two stumpy pipes protruding from the sub flooring was all I'd have to work with. "You should be able to find everything you need to plumb in a good sink in a pile of debris somewhere," he said. "Be sure to scrub everything down with bleach before bringing it inside the house. That will kill any black mold, prevent it from spreading inside and becoming a health hazard." Josh also explained that the collective had decided to buy building supplies only in emergency situations when what was needed could not be salvaged. Made sense to me.

The abundance of supplies in the area was due to the city's inability to keep up with the amount of garbage to be disposed of. As homes were gutted, workers would pile debris curbside, covering the sidewalk and sometimes most of the road. Eventually, the city would load it into dump trucks and haul it away, but for the time being, it sat and continued to rot, unless a resourceful relief worker came along to salvage it. By the end of the day, I found a two bay stainless steal sink, a counter top to go with it, and enough scrap lumber and piping to frame it out and plumb it up.

After doing some carpentry work at Common Ground's Free Health Clinic in Algiers, I met a guy from northern California named Jerry who spoke about the ingenuity of the collective's volunteers: "We're living like ground hogs," he said, "Common Ground hogs." I agreed with him. Common Ground Hogs we were, working ourselves to exhaustion each day. The longer we stayed, the more the days and nights fused into to one continuous cycle of sunrise and sunset. After a few days on the grass roots relief work scene I couldn't tell you what day it was. Nobody could. What we could tell you was that our eyes were bleary, our clothes were dirty and we smelled funky.

The first day I started working with the collective, as I searched through piles of debris for salvageable material, the Red Cross was doing mobile food distribution out of a truck which made its rounds through the Ninth Ward, but they had no workers on the ground. Every now and then, a stream of FEMA trailers would enter the rail yard on a line of flatbed freight cars. They would sit on the tracks for about a week, just long enough to lift the spirits of residents awaiting their arrival before being hitched to a locomotive again and moving north to another location. Even more elusive were the FEMA workers themselves--I don't recall seeing one of them in the Ninth Ward at all during my time there.

At one point, I met up with Malek Rahim, one of the founders of the Common Ground Collective, at his house in Algiers. A long time community organizer and Green Party mayoral candidate for the city of New Orleans, Rahim explained that there is more than just a thick line of red tape keeping federal aid from some of the hardest hit neighborhoods in New Orleans East. He told me: "The plantation syndicates that run the state of Louisiana have their feet on the necks of black population." Citing the potential "land grab" of residential properties by some of the biggest developers in the nation through buy-out and eminent domain as reason for the stalling of federal relief work in these areas, Rahim said that developer's plans have influenced decisions by city officials to keep residents away from their homes. "How can a mother bring her children home and feel safe here when the city won't even turn on the streetlights? How can you go to work and come home when there is still a 4pm curfew in the Lower Ninth Ward that is enforced by federal agents?" he asked.

I took a morning off one day to take some photos. A thick coat of mud still covered the streets. It sucked at the souls of my boots, slowing my stride, making me stop to mourn the missing, those who were unable to evacuate and who perished when the levee on the east bank of the industrial canal burst, sending a massive wave of water through their neighborhood. Flooding was so severe in this area that some houses were completely submerged underwater. Others were washed off their foundations, floating for blocks before becoming caught in trees or anchoring themselves atop other houses.

Kim Price, a Lower Ninth Ward resident, objects to the proposal put forward by the urban planning commission to demolish homes affected by the flooding. "A lot of families want to come back," she told me. "This is their home and they have no other place to go. We are going to rebuild until someone else tells us otherwise. If they can fix [this neighborhood] for the developers, there is no reason why they can't fix it for the people."

If the Common Ground Collective has their way with the city, Price will be able to begin repairs to her property, but activists have made no promises. Residents have experienced one empty promise after another, from the city, from the state, from FEMA, and from insurance companies. The success of the grassroots relief movement depends on the support of the people in the community. Trust is vital to maintaining that support. Common Ground has made it clear to the community that they are committed to standing in solidarity with the people of these areas, that they are committed to providing mutual aid and assistance, while fighting to defend residents' rights. At all times, members of the Collective have been aware of possible trouble at any moment.

On the afternoon of January 5, cell phones began ringing. The enemy had attacked in a neutral zone. Bulldozing of homes had begun. Volunteers left whatever they were doing and searched for any means of transportation to get over to the 2000 Block of Reynes Street in the Lower Ninth Ward. Fast response was critical in this situation. Twenty minutes after my phone rang, I arrived. A number of activists were already there, and a caravan of cars was on its way, trailed by two choppers playing cat and mouse with one another in the air. One was a piloted by federal agents, the other by a television news crew. A police barricade kept us from moving further up Reynes Street to confront the demolition crews. A block away, we were within eyesight and it was clear our presence was making the hard hats uneasy. Tracie Washington, an organizer for the Peoples Hurricane Relief Fund, was on site with a cell phone, informing the city attorney's office that the demolition attempts were "in clear violation of an agreement that the city made on December 28 to hold off on demolitions until a hearing in civil district court." The call was followed by a hail of activist cheers as the demolition crews shut down their operation and retreated from the scene, taking their machinery with them. After a hearing the following day before U.S. District Judge Martin Feldman, it was ruled that the demolition of homes in the Lower Ninth Ward be put on hold until the city's redevelopment plan is finalized.

"One for the underdogs," I thought to myself as I returned to the community center at the end of the day. Usually, by dinner time, volunteers were exhausted, but that evening, everyone was in high spirits. There was a celebration with a sing along around the trash barrel fire in the courtyard. As there were several musicians in camp, a pickup band was quickly formed, with a couple of guitar players, a fiddler, a few pot and pan drummers, a harmonica player and a kid clicking out rhythm on spoons. Everyone had a silly song to contribute. We danced, drank and sang all night. As activists, we were all a bit surprised–for the moment, we had the upper hand on the city. We had shut them down.

The next morning, the Times Picayune headline read, "Lower Ninth Ward Activists Chase Away Bulldozing Crew." I was glad to see something printed in the mainstream media. Though the article made no mention of the Common Ground Collective, it didn't matter to me. None of us did the work we were doing for celebrity status. What mattered was that somebody other than the people involved could read those front page headlines and know what was going on. As I read the article, I thought back on my meeting with Rahim a few days earlier. He had told me: "We are challenging some of the largest corporations in the world that are looking at this as a cash cow, another way to bleed the American public out of its tax dollars. Not only that, together, we are delivering a blow against racism."

Rahim, a man of modest expression, who humbly went about his work each day beneath a mane of wise grey dreadlocks, would not take credit for inspiring the direct action on January 5. He credits the work being done by the Collective to the "spirit of [the] volunteers." This spirit, he believes, helped Common Ground grow into the massive relief organization it is today. "Young

Continued on Next Page

NEW ORLEANS Continued....

Volunteers clear property of debris

people who are making a stand for peace and justice. They come in. They look around. Common Ground is just one of the venues they want to use in that cause for peace and justice," he said.

It was this cause that inspired Rahim, his partner Sharon, and activist Scot Crow to organize the moment they learned that Hurricane Katrina was going to impact New Orleans. Sitting around Rahim's kitchen table on August 27, the three had a total of fifty bucks between them. They decided to put that money toward organizing efforts for when the storm passed. The choice not to evacuate had been made.

Before the hurricane, the three transformed Rahim's kitchen into a makeshift bunker. Rahim ran 2x4s across a corner of his kitchen between the freezer chest and the stove. He then placed a car hood over the 2x4s and put a mattress underneath them so that they would be in a safe place if the roof caved in. Stowed away in the kitchen, the three waited anxiously as the storm thrashed its way through the gulf coast, leaving in its wake battered towns and broken cities.

When the rains stopped, the three immediately secured a space at a local mosque in Rahim's Algiers neighborhood. Located on the east bank of the Mississippi, Algiers did not flood, but many of the homes in the area suffered severe storm damage. In the days that followed, a group of anarchists showed up to assist them. Organizing out of the mosque, the group set up a makeshift clinic, where they provided free health care to survivors in the area. Robert King Wilkerson, the only freed member of the Angola Three, named the space the "Common Ground Clinic." [The Angola Three (Wilkerson, Albert Woodfox and Herman Wallace, all members of the Black Panther Party), were inmates framed by prison officials for two jailhouse murders in 1972 and 1973, as retaliation for their political activism behind bars. Woodfox and Wallace are still incarcerated, having been in solitary confinement for more than 30 years each–Ed.]

Most would agree that such an accomplishment deserved a pat on the back. However, city officials had a different opinion of the grassroots relief movement. Rahim remembered the early days of Common Ground: "When the city first found out about us, we were the laughing joke of the city. They didn't believe this could happen. They thought Malek, that old militant, done hooked up with some young dirty hippies, and all they will be doing is having orgies. They were calling our health clinic the hippie clinic,"

Rahim laughed, explaining how that joke quickly turned in on itself, when those who first doubted the Collective watched in disbelief as Common Ground's operations grew into what they are today. The Collective currently operates five distribution centers in four parishes, two free health clinics, an after school tutorial program and an adult education center. They also offer a number of other free services to returning residents, including house gutting, tree removal, roof tarping, and legal support, In five months, Common Ground has provided services to over 50,000 residents.

Not one elected official has visited any of their facilities during this time, but their impact upon the city and surrounding parishes cannot be ignored. Currently, Common Ground is focusing a great deal of their energy on preserving residents' properties in the Lower Ninth Ward, a neighborhood whose fate is yet be determined by the Urban Planning Commission's redevelopment proposal. Blueprints laid out in closed door meetings don't slow progress on the grassroots level. In fact, knowledge of such planning meetings fans the already burning ambitions of the volunteer community. "Their plans are their plans," Rahim said. "We are not going to react to their plans because if we do, we are going to end up losing. We have to go ahead and carry out ours. I don't care what their plans are. I don't care what those developers are trying to do. What we are doing is moving to set up an alternative."

That was exactly what the collective intended to do when they moved into the Greater Mount Carmel Baptist Church on the corner of Pauline and Claiborne Avenue in the Upper Ninth Ward in late October. After establishing a base camp, a distribution center was opened. A Women's shelter and health clinic followed. Common Ground's community activism has forced the city to re-evaluate their plans for the area. Where the city once sought to send bulldozers to demolish homes under eminent domain, they were now clearing debris from roads so that residents could return home. Where downed wires once hung hazardously on lawns and sidewalks, the utility company Entergy was now coming around to restore electricity. Block by block, house by house, the lights were coming back on.

To think that a collective founded by an ex Black Panther and a group of anarchists was responsible for saving a neighborhood was almost more than I could fathom. But direct action did bring about the eight hour work day, the right for Women to vote, and desegregated schools. Perhaps history will soon add the rebuilding of New Orleans for its people to that list.

WORLD WAR 4 REPORT:
Deconstructing
The War On Terrorism
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OPEC AND IRAQ Continued...

record-breaking $4.48 billion in fourth-quarter earnings. ExxonMobil in 2004 reported the largest one-year operating profit of any corporation in U.S. history.

When I talked to Ariel Cohen at Heritage, his dream of smashing OPEC in shambles, he blamed the State Department for acquiescing to the Saudis and to Russia, which also benefit s from selling oil at high OPEC prices. The poisonous policies were influenced, he said, by "Arab economists hired by the State Department who are basically supporting the witches' brew of the Saudi royal family and the Soviets...because the Saudis are interested in maximizing their market share and they're not interested in fast growth of the Iraqi output."

According to Morse, the switch to an OPEC-friendly policy for Iraq was driven by Dick Cheney himself. "The person who is most influential in running American energy policy is the Vice President," who, says Morse, "thinks that security begins by... letting prices follow wherever they may."

Even, I asked, if those are artificially high prices, set by OPEC? "The VP's office [has] not pursued a policy in Iraq that would lead to a rapid opening of the Iraqi energy sector ...so they have not done anything, either with producers or energy policy, that would put us on a track to say, 'We're going to put a squeeze on OPEC.'"

Opposition to OPEC was handled in a style that would have made Saddam proud. On May 20, 2004, Iraqi police raided Ahmad Chalabi's home in Baghdad and carted away his computers and files. Chalabi was hunted by his own government: the charge was espionage, no less, for Iran. Chalabi's Governing Council was soon shut down and, crucially, Bahr al-Uloum was yanked from the Oil Ministry and replaced by the very men he had removed: Thamer Ghadhban, who took al-Uloum's job at the oil ministry and Chalabi rival Muhammad al-Jiburi who was made minister of trade.

But just when you thought the fat lady sang for the neocons, who should rise from his crypt eight months later but Ahmad Chalabi? In January 2005, Chalabi cut a deal with his former oil minister's father, a Shia power broker, and rode that religious ethnic vote back into office. Chalabi landed himself the post of Second Deputy Prime Minister and, in addition, the tantalizing title of interim oil minister. The espionage investigation was dropped; the King of Jordan offered to pardon Chalabi for the $72 million missing from Chalabi's former bank; and Chalabi once again turned over his oil ministry to Sheik al-Uloum's son. The Texans' OPEC man Ghadhban, was again kicked downstairs.

But Chalabi had learned his lesson: don't mess with Texas, or the Texan's favorite cartel. A chastened Chalabi now endorses Iraq's cooperation with OPEC's fleecing of the planet's oil consumers.

And Dick Cheney, far from "putting the squeeze on OPEC," has taken his de facto seat there, assenting by silence to the oil monopoly's piratical price gouging. But hasn't OPEC's stratospheric crude prices choked the life out of America's auto industry and bankrupted half a dozen airlines? In the Vice-President's bunker, the elimination of jobs of Democratic-leaning union members is likely seen as a bonus for the good deed of boosting oil industry profits far above the ozone layer.

[Greg Palast is the author of the New York Times bestseller, "The Best Democracy Money Can Buy." This is his fourth investigative report for Harper's Magazine. Leni von Eckardt was chief researcher with Palast on this project. The BBC Television Newsnight broadcast of this story was produced by Meirion Jones. View the BBC report and sign up for Palast's investigation updates at www.GregPalast.com]

PIPELINE WARS Continued....

to cross the Sierra de Perija, the mountain range which forms the Colombian border. This strategic Sierra is already slated by the Chavez government for new coal-mining concessions, which has led to the first signs of tension between the populist regime and indigenous peoples and ecologists. Chavez also supports a controversial plan to increase coal mining operations in the state of Zulia, a key oil-producing region bordering Colombia. But ecologists and Zulia's water authorities warn that the plan may threaten the mountain aquifers which are the state's most important water supply.

The national plan for the Sierra Perija and Zulia includes construction of a new megaport for coal export at the sea mouth of Lake Maracaibo, to be dubbed Puerto America, and a 500-megawatt coal-fueled electric plant to power a new rail line linking the port to the mines. Zulia already faces a chronic water shortage--impacting not only the state's north-western coal-mining regions of Mara and Paez, but also the city of Maracaibo. Many districts of the city receive running water only once a week. The national government recently provided Zulia a loan of $15 million for water infrastructure for the state's northwest region. However, this infrastructure would still depend on the two reservoirs now threatened by increased coal production.

Lusbi Portillo, a professor at the University of Zulia and head of the environmental group Homo et Natura, told online journal *Venezuelan Analysis* "Coal is not very significant in terms of economic production. However, coal is important to other countries like the US, which consumes more than 900 million tons of coal each year."

Portillo also points out that investments for Puerto America will eventually come from the IMF and the World Bank--despite the anti-globalization stance of the Chavez government. "Venezuela is serving the [US] empire at our expense, and Zulia is a zone of sacrifice," says Portillo. Portillo argues that Venezuela's environmental movement has been paradoxically weakened under the progressive Chavez government. "It's like ploughing the ocean. In an oil culture where we were taught that oil, coal and minerals make us rich, where can you go? PDVSA is supposedly ours now, it has been rescued from multinational corporations, this is what people believe, and this makes our work as ecologists even harder."

For his activism on behalf of the Sierra de Perija, Portillo has been menaced by powerful figures in Venezuela's industrial bureaucracy. In December 2004, the Venezuelan Program for Education and Action in Human Rights (Provea), an independent group, issued an urgent alert warning of threats made against Portillo by Brigade General Carlos Martinez, president of the regional public development authority CorpoZulia, and by Juan Rojas, an engineer with the Venezuelan Ministry of Energy and Mines (MEM).

According to Provea, at a forum at the Second Bolivarian Congress of Peoples held that month in Venezuela, Martinez said: "Just as there existed a human rights mafia in Venezuela, environmentalists formed a green mafia. Behind this green mafia, opposed to the exploitation of coal in the Sierra de Perija, were the counter-revolutionaries and the transnational companies, and it was directed by the CIA." He singled Portillo for particularly damning criticism, citing his recent statements against the mining concessions in the Zulia state newspaper *The Truth*. Three days later, at another meeting, Rojas stated that Portillo was "a terrorist" and accused him of stealing MEM vehicles.

Despite these tensions, the rupture between indigenous peoples in Zulia and the Chavez government is not yet complete. But the struggle in the Sierra de Perija could prove a microcosm of the contradictions Chavez and his South American allies will face in the new race for strategic control of the continent's resources.

THE SHADOW NEVER SLEEPS!!

BIRD FLU HYPE Continued....

that led to hospitalization, plus the deaths of an additional ten pediatric patients from other non-neurological side effects.

The U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) refused to beef up its warnings in response to the Japanese data, stating that, since the patients were suffering from influenza, there was no way of knowing whether it was the oseltamivir or the influenza virus itself that led to any particular death. The FDA stated that symptoms of such side effects had not yet turned up in the U.S. Up to this point, Japan has been the place where Tamiflu has been most heavily tested, with 34 million doses prescribed, so we may have to wait until the drug has become that widespread in the U.S. before we have enough data to confirm or contradict the Japanese studies in a statistically significant manner.

Dr. Frist, the Cat Killer, Presents His "Government Knows Best" Act

Such safety statistics may not even be available to the consumer under legislation now winding its way through the Senate. Senate Bill 1873, known as the Bio-Defense Pandemic Vaccine and Drug Development Act, sponsored by Republican Majority Leader Bill Frist, provides for the creation of a government agency to deal with health emergencies, to be called the Biomedical Advanced Research and Development Agency (BARDA), which would be the first government agency ever created with an a prior exemption to the Freedom of Information Act. The bill states: "Information that relates to the activities, working groups, and advisory boards of the BARDA shall not be *subject to disclosure under section 552 of* title 5, United States Code [Freedom of Information Act], unless the Secretary or Director determines that such disclosure would pose no threat to national security. Such a determination shall not be subject to judicial review."

Why would legislators ostensibly concerned with transparency and openness be so interested in creating an agency specifically exempt from disclosing information, for example, regarding bacterial contamination of a vaccine or the side effects of a drug like Tamiflu? Although Senate Bill 1873 does not specifically address the subject of forced vaccination or drugging, by removing liability when things go wrong, it gives more ammunition to authoritarian health officials who believe that the only way to fight disease is with sweeping, mandatory vaccination.

Does Senator Bill Frist, a Tennessee heart-transplant surgeon and co-founder of Hospital Corporation of America (HCA), the largest private operator of health care services in the world, really have national security in mind when he wants to make certain health information classified, thereby granting immunity and impunity to all of those involved in any possibly faulty decision-making process?

Frist is currently being investigated by the Securities Exchange Commission (SEC) in connection with a an order that he gave to sell all of his shares in HCA, just two weeks before the stock fell 15 points. Frist also has a long history of shady dealings in the name of Big Medicine that perhaps started when he was a medical student at Harvard in the 1970s and took cats out of shelters on the pretext of adopting them, only to bring them to the labs at the medical school and practice heart surgery upon them, leading to the eventual deaths of the animals. Perhaps that is why he is so enthusiastic about the veil of secrecy that Senate Bill 1873 provides to duplicitous doctors.

Meanwhile, even though it is still a bird virus and not a human one, the avian flu virus strain H5N1 has already demonstrated resistance to Tamiflu. The World Health Organization has reported that a girl in Vietnam under treatment with oseltamivir for an apparent poultry transmitted infection, showed high-level resistance to the antiviral. Many other cases of resistance by more common, human-transmitted versions of the virus have also been reported.

To Hell With Their Poison

The issue for those of us who are not big stockholders in pharmaceutical companies seems to be whether we are willing to allow people to stick needles into our bodies and inject us with substances that, under certain circumstances have been associated with the transmission of diseases, such as the above-mentioned Serratia bacteria, and possibly worse.

All "attenuated" vaccines against the flu virus contain actual virus-derived materials and have been associated with flu-like reactions in a certain percentage of those vaccinated. Particularly when pressured to stretch out a limited amount of vaccine, pharmaceutical companies often mix in "adjuvants," any number of chemical agents intended to enhance the immune response, often at the expense of greater irritation and in some cases, the formation of unstable scar tissue around the injection site associated with subsequent sarcomas and other cancers. It is not necessarily a question of how many people actually end up suffering from the after effects of vaccinations, because even if it is only a fraction of a percent, individuals have the right to decide how much risk they will expose themselves to.

Swine Flu and Swine Government

The example of the kind of physician-disseminated disaster that can result from blind reliance on vaccines is demonstrated by the "Swine Flu" scare of 1976 when, after military recruits at Fort Dix, New Jersey became infected with a strain of flu (H1N1) normally seen only in pigs and which then seemed to be spreading to humans. H1N1 had similar identifying traits to the virus believed to have disseminated in the influenza pandemic after World War I.

Then-President Gerald Ford, in consultation with his many contacts in the pharmaceutical industry, whom he had represented in the Senate for many years, initiated a program to immunize all of the then 220 million residents of the U.S. Ford himself was immunized in front of t.v. cameras. The feared pandemic never materialized and the soldiers at Fort Dix are now believed to have been the victims either of an isolated instance of a rare strain of flu or of a misdiagnosis. On the other hand, some 25 deaths occurred among the approximately 24 percent of the population (about 40 million) that were actually vaccinated, and a rise in the instance of a polio-like autoimmune disease called Guillain-Barre syndrome was noted among the vaccinated population.

Pandemic of War, Pandemic of Poverty

Central to government propaganda concerning avian influenza is the great influenza pandemic of 1918-1920. The malnutrition and displacement wrought by the First World War fanned the dissemination of the disease. In American, vitamin-poor diets associated with poverty, as well as a lack of individual consciousness about the health of the immune system and its relationship to diet and personal behavior, allowed the disease to spread through its big cities and claim hundreds of thousands of lives.

Now, new diseases are breeding in the places where animals are force fed and slaughtered to satisfy our fatty urges and spread obesity. There is a symmetry between the damage that we humans inflict on the environment, on other living things, and that which we inflict upon ourselves. Instead of entrusting our health and our future to the likes of Donald Rumsfeld or Bill Frist, per-haps we need to be improving our diets and getting rid of war and mass displacements, the scourges of the twentieth century which are showing no sign of abatement in the twenty-first.

They Want to Inject Us!

(Write and Call now)

The politicians listed below are members of the Senate Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions (HELP) Committee that allowed the "The Biodefense and Pandemic Vaccine and Drug Development Act of 2005" (BARDA, also known as S. 1873) to move on to the Senate floor where it awaits a full Senate vote. This bill envisions forced vaccines and forced drugging with untested/experimental drugs and vaccines, and gives freedom from liability to drug companies. The sponsors of the bill are Burr, Enzi, Gregg, Frist, Alexander, and Dole, all Republicans. Some of the Democrats, including Kennedy and Clinton, voiced objections to parts of the bill, but did not take the necessary measures to stop it from moving on to the full Senate. These pols think we are all guinea pigs ready to die for their incompetence. Use this information to give them hell.

REPUBLICANS:

> Judd Gregg (R-NH): 393 Russell Senate Office Building, Washington, DC 20510. Phone: (202) 224-3324, Fax: (202) 224-4952. <http://gregg.senate.gov/sitepages/contact.cfm>

> William Frist (R-TN): 509 Hart Senate Office Building, Washington, DC 20510. Phone: (202) 224-3344, Fax: (202) 228-1264. <http://frist.senate.gov/index.cfm>

> Mike Enzi (R-WY): 379A Russell Senate Office Building, Washington, DC 20510. Phone: (202) 224-3424, Fax: (202) 228-0359. <http://enzi.senate.gov/email.htm>

> Richard Burr (R-NC): 217 Russell Senate Office Building, Washington, DC 20510. Phone: (202) 224-3154, Fax: (202) 228-2981. <http://burr.senate.gov/index.cfm>

> Johnny Isakson (R-GA): 120 Russell Senate Office Building, Washington, DC 20510. Phone: (202) 224-3643, Fax: (202) 228-0724. <http://isakson.senate.gov/contact.cfm>

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> Pat Roberts (R-KS): 109 Hart Senate Office Building, Washington, DC 20510. Phone: (202) 224-4774, Fax (202) 224-3514. <http://roberts.senate.gov/e-mail_pat.html>

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> Edward Kennedy (D-MA): 317 Russell Senate Office Building, Washington, DC 20510. Phone: (202) 224-4543, Fax: (202) 224-2417. <http://kennedy.senate.gov/index_high.html>

> Christopher Dodd (D-CT): 448 Russell Senate Office Building, Washington, DC 20510. Phone (202) 224-2823, Fax (202) 228-1683. <http://dodd.senate.gov/webmail/form-opinion.html>

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> Jack Reed (D-RI): 728 Hart Senate Office Building, Washington, DC 20510. Phone:(202) 224-4642, Fax (202) 224-4680. <http://reed.senate.gov/form-opinion.htm>

> Hillary Clinton (D-NY): 476 Russell Senate Office Building, Washington, DC 20510. Phone: (202) 224-4451, D.C. Fax (202) 228-0282, NY Fax (631) 249-2847. <http://clinton.senate.gov/contact/webform.cfm?subj=issu>

(Info provided by Citizens for Legitimate Government, a multi-partisan activist group established to expose the Bush Coup d'Etat and oppose the Bush occupation in all of its manifestations. See: <http://www.legitgov.org/index.html> for more info)

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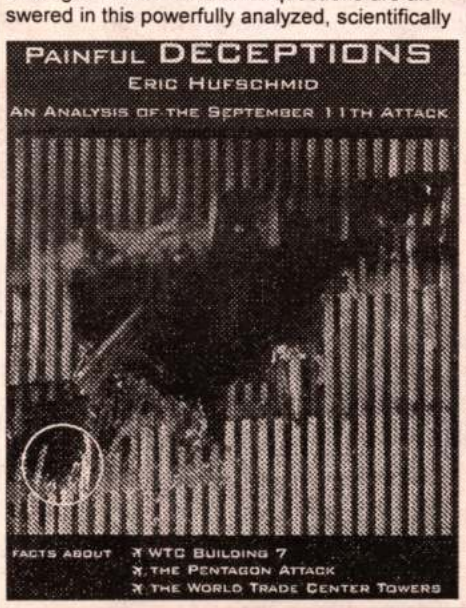

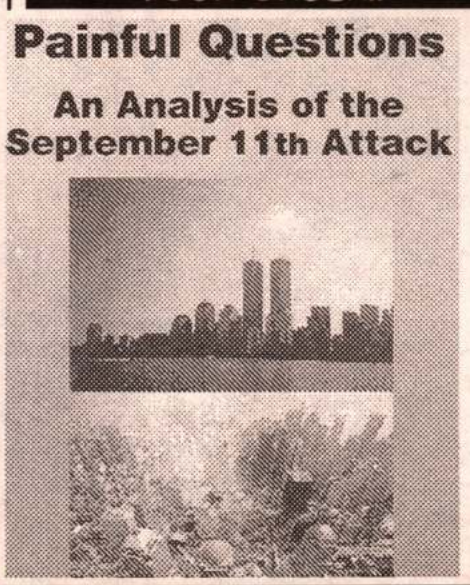

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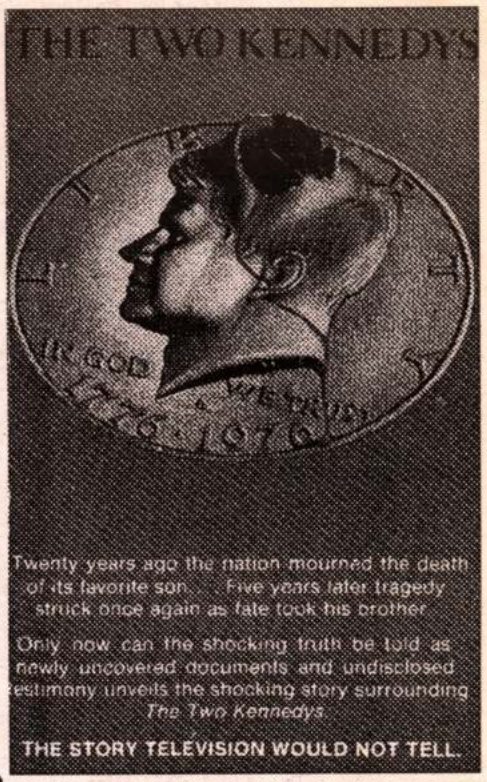
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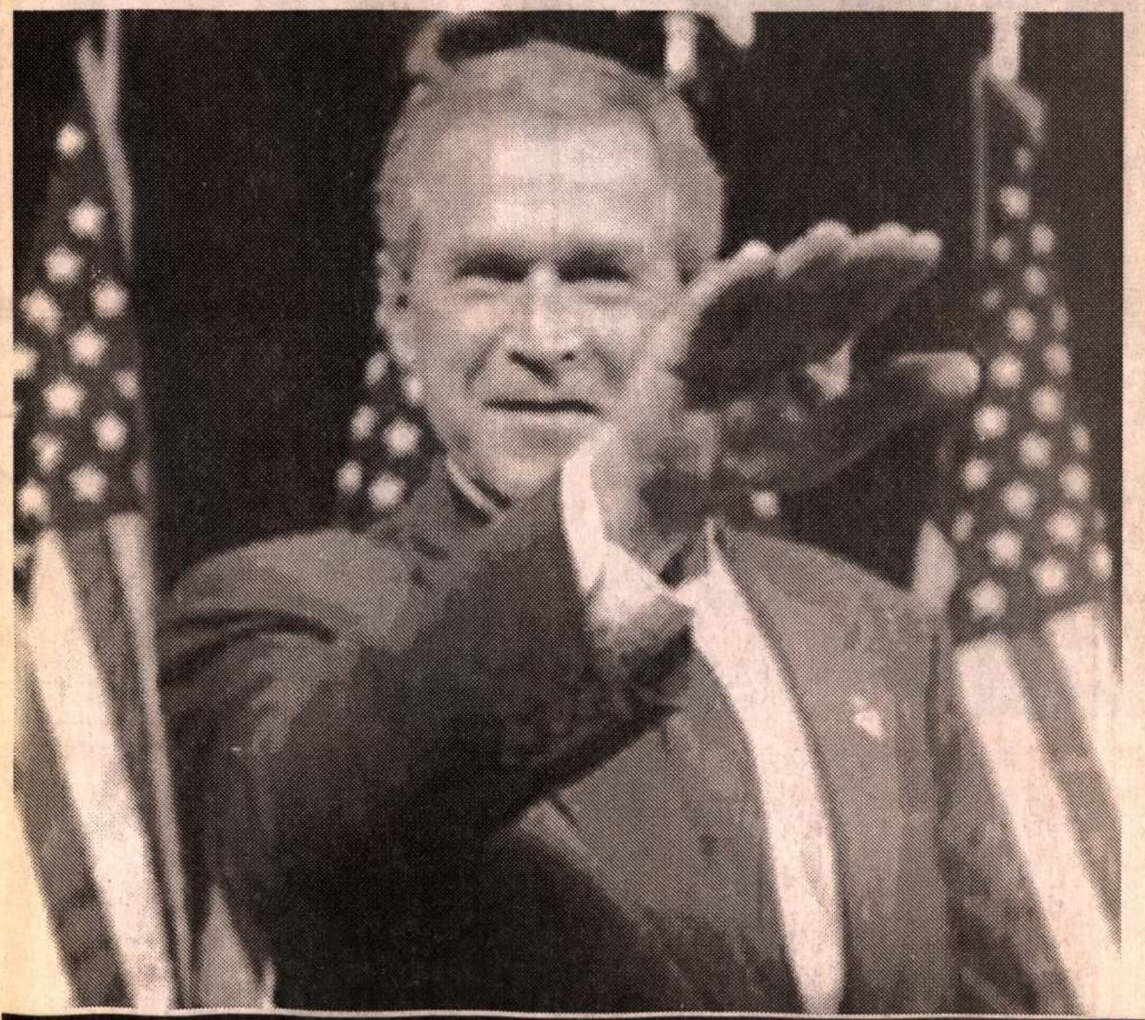

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